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THE SPORT OF TWO CITIES

OR, JINGO JIM'S JAMBOREE.

BY JO PIERCE,
AUTHOR OF "REDDY RUSHER," "ACE HIGH,"
"DICK OF THE DOCKS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG PEDDLER'S ADVENTURE.

It had been a good day with Jingo Jim, for all his wares had been disposed of successfully. The money was in his pocket, and he would have felt rich if he had not had expenses to meet. Even as it was he went to the office of the concern from which he had his wares with a light heart. The manager was at the desk.

"Hello, Jim!" was his greeting. "What luck?"

"IT'S SPORTY STANFORD," DECLARED JINGO JIM. "YES, THAT IS THE MAN WHO KILLED THE BOATMAN!"

"Count it!"

With this terse direction the boy emptied his pockets and the manager quickly ran over the coins.

"Good for you!" he exclaimed. "You must have had a rush of trade. Is this all for us?"

"Yes."

"You don't seem happy over it. Do you want a little more credit?"

"No."

"All right. Come around in the morning and we will fix you up for the day. The leaping kangaroos must be going well."

"They be—great hit. I'll be round."

With this reply, and preserving a serious cast of countenance, Jim walked out of the office. He was quickly forgotten by the manager, but it remained a fact that Jim had problems of importance to confront.

He was now fifteen years old and his own master and own helper, for he did not know of a relative in the world. His business, as before indicated, was the selling of notions on the streets of New York. At this he had always done fairly well, and he had managed to get a living which, to him, seemed good until he fell sick and was off the streets for some time. When he was again about, his money was all gone and he had debts to pay. It might have been a grave matter to him if his credit had not been good at the office. He was known there and trusted, and he had been allowed credit, which few could have obtained if they were as friendless as he was.

The latest novelty was a kangaroo toy, that turned handsprings in a fascinating way, and it had helped Jim a good deal. If he had been less conscientious he might have endured less, but he was zealous to pay all debts at home and at the office, and by doing this as fast as possible he had that evening made himself almost penniless.

After leaving the office he walked briskly on until he neared the tenement house where he made his home. Close to the door he noticed a small number of people around what proved to be a dead horse. Dead horses were no novelty in New York, yet Jim did not fail to stop and look at this one.

Its owner stood close to it, but this did not prevent uncomplimentary comments.

"He ought ter be took away quick," remarked a boy. "He's so poor his bones will cut holes in the stones."

"He is the homeliest hoss I ever seen," added another. "He tried ter be white, but it got mixed up with seven or eight other colors."

"He's got a frame big enough fer a thirteen hundred hoss, but he won't weigh over eight hundred."

These comments impressed Jingo Jim as frivolous, but he did not know what an important bearing they were to have on his future. He looked on with but slight interest, saying nothing.

"I guess," added another person, "that he has seen more thumps than grain lately."

"A clean case of starved to death."

The owner of the horse suddenly aroused.

"What you chumps don't know would break down Brooklyn Bridge!" he retorted, angrily. "That horse was twenty years old, and has been ailing for a month. He was sick, he was. I ain't been able ter drive him fer a long while, but I took him out ter-night jest ter exercise him. I thought mebber it would do him good, and that if it didn't it wouldn't be no great loss. That's why I put this dilapidated old saddle on him."

When the horse first fell its late rider

had managed to loosen and remove the saddle. It had been lying on the pavement. The owner now picked it up. He looked at it critically, saw how worn and apparently useless it was, and then looked up quickly.

"I wouldn't take this thing home for a dozen o' them," he pursued. "Anybody want it?"

He spoke as if he expected a general refusal, but he was a good deal surprised when a slight form broke through the crowd and seized the saddle with eager hands.

"Yes, give it ter me!"

It was Jingo Jim, and as no one else, poor as some of them were, put in a claim for the seemingly worn-out saddle, it was his property by right of first claimant.

"All you need now is a horse an' you will be fitted out," remarked a bystander, with sarcasm.

Jim made no reply, but, picking up the saddle, he entered the door of his tenement home without more delay. It was a building which in its early days had been thought lofty, no doubt, and it did tower in the air somewhat. Jim lived on the top floor, and to this point he took his way.

Entering a door, finally, he was in a good-sized room, which, however, was about as dreary as it could be. Not one article of superfluous furniture was to be seen, and not much that was necessary. The floor was bare, and so was nearly everything else.

In one corner was a sort of bed, consisting of a few substitutes for quilts, spread in a pile. On this couch lay two men, sleeping. A third man sat on a dilapidated chair, smoking.

He looked up indifferently as Jim entered, but grew more interested as he saw what the boy bore in his hand. Although the latter was not a puzzle in its nature, the man inquired:

"W'ot ye got there?"

"A saddle," practically replied Jim.

"I see you have. W'ot in thunder do you want of it? It's so old you couldn't git five cents fer it, an' this ain't no storehouse."

"Bob, I want et fer a pillar," explained the peddler.

"Oh!"

Bob smoked silently for a few seconds, and then added, gravely:

"It may be w'uth it."

"I've got tired o' sleepin' with my head on my arm, an' this didn't cost me nothin'. I think it's a good bargain."

"Hum!"

Bob had little to say, but Jingo Jim proceeded to try his idea. He brought out a piece of dirty carpet a few feet square and spread it on the floor. He placed the saddle and then lay down on the carpet and rested his head on the saddle.

"Et's boss!" he declared.

"Hum!"

Really, Bob approved of the wisdom of the plan, but, as the saddle would take up room, he did not want to set the seal of his approval too decidedly upon it. Jim lay still and looked happy.

This miserable room had been his home for a year. He had shared it in common with the three men now there. Like himself, all were street peddlers, and nobody thought of being captious in regard to the quarters. The men all slept in the same bed, if the heap of rags could be thus called. Jim had the fragment of carpet, and nothing more.

Just before he was taken sick Jim had decided that he could afford a better bed, but the lost time and money had settled that for the present, and he had troubled himself no more about it. The moment he

saw the saddle outside a happy thought had come to him.

Here was a pillow. It was something gained, and perhaps the bed would come in due time, as he collected money.

He began to plan for this great luxury as he lay there now, and the hope was duly indulged in until saddles, beds and business in general all became mixed up in a confused medley and the boy peddler slept. So did his elders, and when Bob soon joined them it was a silent room.

This scene was repeated every evening. The party herded in the place like cattle, and, really, lived a miserable life, but Jim was used to it, and he did not know that he was illy favored of fortune. Contracted as was his sphere at night, he had the whole of New York by day, and he had remained cheerful under all trials until his sickness introduced a serious element into his usually happy disposition.

On this night he slept for some hours without even a dream to disturb him, but he was finally awakened.

Something was disturbing his rest. He knew this before he was fully aroused, and it dawned upon him more and more.

"Lemme alone!" he muttered, sleepily.

Thump!

His head hit the floor with a force which wholly dispelled sleep, and then he tried to spring to his feet. He only succeeded in running full into somebody else, and he was flung to the floor again by the collision.

Accustomed to wild life and to taking care of himself, he reached out with mechanical energy and his hands closed around somebody. He held fast.

"Let go!" cried this person, out of the darkness.

"You've stole my saddle!"

Jingo Jim's head was clear, if he was just aroused, and it was a direct and positive accusation he made. Regarding the saddle as a treasure, he believed he knew just what a thief would take of all things in the room.

There was no reply, but he first received a thump in the ribs and was next shaken like a pear tree with fruit that was tempting. The fruit did not come down; Jim still held on, and began to send out his feet in vicious kicks, that landed squarely on the shins of the unknown.

A strong exclamation escaped the latter's lips.

"Let go or I will smash you!" he exclaimed, in the emphatic language of the region.

"You drop that saddle or I'll smash you!" retorted the young peddler.

Perhaps the robber perceived that delay was dangerous, for he did drop the saddle. This made it no better for Jim, for, with both hands free, the man landed on the boy like a cyclone. Larger and stronger hands were opposed to Jim, and he was whirled around the room like a top. The robber was bound to break his hold at all hazards.

"Leave go!" he hissed.

"No, I won't!" defiantly cried Jim.

"I'll hurt ye!"

"Give up that saddle!"

Jim was true to his ruling idea, and his grasp seemed to be of steel, but he was having a rocky time of it. A good deal of the time he was swinging in air, and, though his muscle stood him in good service, he gradually grew dizzy and confused.

Suddenly his hold broke and he went flying away, and as he fell heavily, a tremendous clatter told that he had struck something besides the floor.

Partially stunned, he squirmed around without much method, and the next he knew, Bob's voice was ringing in his ears.

"What's that?" cried the leader of the

peddlers. "Who is drunk? What smashed the door? Was there an explosion?"

Bob was confused and talked wide of the mark, but Jingo Jim was recalled to things practical. He struggled to his feet, and then his own voice broke in.

"Git a light! Strike a match an' we will ketch him."

"Ketch who?"

"Why, the man."

"What man?"

"Shoot it!" cried Jim, in great indignation; "will you stop yer cacklin' an' strike that glim?"

Bob was awed by this fierce reproof, and he made for the lamp without more ado. When he found it he made haste to get the light, and, presently, the gloom was dispelled. Jim looked around and then shot out of the door.

Bob glanced after him, looked at the broken chair and then back to the door where Jim had been.

"He's got it!" murmured Bob.

"Who's got what?" asked one of the other peddlers.

"Jingo Jim is gone crazy."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes."

"What done it?"

"He got too rich, and it turned his head. The love o' money is the root of all evil. Sudden wealth turned Jim's head like a wheel. That saddle is ter blame fer it all, an' I'll chuck the thing out—"

The speaker stopped short. He had turned to look for the saddle, but it was not there. Bob shook his head soberly.

"He must hev' took it an' run off. Yes, poor Jim, he's gone crazy!"

The other peddlers congregated around Bob. Nobody thought of disputing him. They had been asleep and supposed he had been awake. He ought to know what he was talking about.

The crowd was not an especially interesting-looking one, and their intelligence was not above the level of their class, but they had kind hearts under their dirty clothes.

"Poor Jim!" they murmured, in concert.

"I always thought he was queer," added Simon Skiffsky.

"Terrible frivolous, at times."

"Yes, an' awful sober when he was sick."

"Sure sign he was crazy."

"We will hev' him put in a 'sylum."

"Yes, before he kills himself or us."

"Poor Jim!" cried the chorus.

Just then the object of their compassion came in hastily.

"He's got away!" exclaimed the boy, "but ef I don't nab him ter-night I will later on. He didn't steal that saddle because he thought it was vallerble. There's a mystery, an' I'll solve it, sure pop!"

CHAPTER II.

JINGO JIM INVESTIGATES.

The older peddlers looked at the boy in surprise, forgetting for the moment that he was supposed to be crazy.

"What's that?" asked Simon Skiffsky.

"Gents," answered Jim, with energy, "I tell you that wasn't no common robbery. Who but me would want that saddle? It wouldn't sell fer so much as a necktie ter put on a hoss's back, an' most everybody but me has a pillar. There is a mystery about this robbery."

"What mystery could there be in an old, worn-out saddle?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out."

Jim, filled with anger because of his loss, proceeded to thump his fists vigorously on his chest, which brought back the previous ideas of his associates—that the boy was going crazy.

They fell back from him in haste.

"He's gettin' voylent," whispered Isaac Levy.

"See the wild an' frenzied gleam of his eyes," added Simon Skiffsky.

Jingo Jim had not been expected to be taken for a crazy person, so he missed all this. Suddenly, owing sullen, he went to his piece of carpet, threw himself down and tried to compose himself to slumber.

His companions consulted. Isaac was for having him put under restraint at once, and Simon thought it might well be done, but Bob was not so foolish. He took the ground that the boy was not yet a dangerous person, and it would be best to wait and make sure he was to be so before taking radical steps.

This counsel prevailed, and, though Skiffsky and Levy returned to bed with some misgivings, they managed to fall asleep again. Better still, daylight found the whole party alive—Jingo Jim had not made any violent demonstration.

The boy was unusually silent during the morning hours, and not disposed to discuss his loss. What he thought he told to nobody, but went about his business as soon as possible.

All day he peddled his leaping kangaroos without evidence that he had other matters on his mind, but when night approached he ceased work ahead of time and took his way home.

Disturbances and rows were common in the tenement, and nobody had been excited by the events of the previous night except those in the room, but the other peddlers had spread the news, and when Jim reached home he was promptly visited by a stout tenant of Irish blood and the name of O'Brien.

She was a woman with a heart as big as her body, metaphorically speaking, and she came with sympathy implanted on her red face.

"Sure, Jimmy, be you alive?" she asked.

"Yep," answered James.

"But yer bones must be all broke."

"Why?"

"The sorry way they used ye last night."

"That was only a scrap."

"Be yez onto the stuffs that did it?"

"No."

"Watch Denny Stone."

"Eh?"

"Watch Denny Stone," Mrs. O'Brien repeated, with an emphatic nod.

Jim was silent for a moment. He knew Denny Stone. Denny was a boy of his own age, who lived in the tenement, and an old enemy of Jim's. They had long known each other; they had fought time and again, and Denny had spent most of his leisure time trying to worry Jim. Denny was a tough boy, cordially hated by Jim, and well known as the latter's enemy.

"What o' him?" inquired Jim, after a pause.

"He was out in the crowd when you got that saddle, an' pretty soon after I see him talkin' with a sport. I guess the sport was a dealer in second-hand goods, that's what I guess. While they talked they was on the sidewalk, but they looked up this way often, and I thought then they was talkin' about that saddle. They knew yez got it fer nothin', an' it was just a put-up job ter beat ye out o' the thing. The sport an' Denny was inter it. Now you go and git a cop."

"Me git a cop."

"Sure, an' didn't I say so?"

"They wouldn't heed me."

"Me cousin's brother-in-law has a sister whose best feller is a cop up in the goat deestriect. Now, you say the word, an' I'll use infloence fer ye. We'll hev' this took ter court."

James slowly shook his head. He knew

policemen of old, and had not found them his friends. To him it seemed that they had a special antipathy to peddlers, and he had been more hindered than helped by them. More, he knew the saddle was not valuable enough to engage the attention of any court.

"I'll think it over," he finally replied.

"Don't think—act!"

"Well, maybe I will."

"Maybes don't go, nor they won't make the kettle boil. Jest you take my advice, an' hev' them thieves up before the law. They will be took to Sing Sing instanter."

Mrs. O'Brien gave more advice—in fact, she nearly overwhelmed Jim with it—but, fortunately, she was somewhat pressed for time, and so soon left him to himself. His mind did not dwell on policemen.

"I'll bet a dollar Denny's inter it!" was his comment. "He was not the one who shook me up so. That may have been the sport. Now I think of it, I believe I did hear somebody else near the door, an' Denny may have been right alongside the thief. I'll look ter Denny an' see w'ot he's about."

Jim went out of the room and was about to investigate that part of the human beehive where Denny lived, when that person himself emerged from his parents' rooms and started toward the front door.

"Hullo," murmured James, "he's got some new clothes."

This was an event. Denny was not a worker, and his parents did not keep him supplied with much better than rags, so the appearance of a new suit gave ground for suspicion, Jim thought.

"I'll pipe him," decided the peddler.

Denny kept on his way, and, leaving the house, walked off briskly. Plainly, he did not anticipate pursuit, and Jim had no trouble in shadowing his game.

In less than a minute Denny was in Chatham Square, and from there he walked on until the Brooklyn Bridge was reached.

"He will take the promenade," muttered James.

He was wrong. Denny marched up to the ticket office, disbursed five cents for two green tickets, and pursued his way into a car. He rode in triumph to the Twin City, while, in the next car back, rode Jim. Reaching the other side, Denny took to his feet and tramped several blocks, when, on a street corner, he was suddenly accosted by a man whose appearance aroused the watching peddler at once.

"Crickey! there's the sport!"

Of course the boy referred to the especial sport mentioned by Mrs. O'Brien. There was no proof that he was right in this suspicion, but Denny surely was in conversation with a man whose looks fitted the character of a man about town.

He was a rather decent-looking fellow as far as face and figure went, but had a rakish air, and his clothes were those of a flashy man of questionable character.

"They talk ter each other earnest," murmured the spy. "I wish I could hear 'em. Can I?"

There did not seem to be any chance. He might advance close to them, but Denny was not blind, and would not fail to recognize his fellow-tenant of the Chatham Square region if he saw him.

"No, I can't," he decided. "I've got ter keep on the edge. Mebbe I can get onter somethin', but I guess the odds is against it. Say, but they are havin' a nice little chat. Jest suits Denny Stone, too. He's as sassy as a cop when he's round Chatham Square, but now he don't say a word that's brash. Mister Sport has him tamed. W'ot did it? Was et cash, or—"

The sport had put his hand in his pocket. Now it came out, and he handed some money to Denny.

"Thought so, by gum!" exclaimed Jim. "There is some mean game goin' on, an' Denny an' Red Face are inter et big. Oh! you tarriers, I jest know it was you stole my saddle!"

Suddenly the shadower dodged into a doorway. The money had seemed to end the interview, and Denny Stone was moving away. Jim kept to his ambush and saw him go. He was in doubt as to his next step, but soon made a decision.

"I kin find Denny any time, but this Mister Red Face I don't know. I must pipe him a bit more an' see who he is. I may need to raid him."

The sport had watched Denny go, but there was now a new diversion. A man drove up with a rather fine-looking bay horse attached to a vehicle of a pattern not new to Jim. It was light, and covered wholly over the top. Once it might have been fine-looking, but it had gone to decay.

Observant Jim marked it down as a former delivery wagon, now sent adrift in its old age.

This turnout pulled up near the sport, and the driver and the sport conferred for a few minutes. This done, the driver fell back and disappeared around the corner. The first man kept his place, and five minutes passed. Then there was a new arrival.

An athletic-looking young fellow approached and was promptly accosted by the sport. The latter seemed very glad to see him, and held out his hand cordially. It was taken, but in a way which gave Jim a clew to their relations.

"He wanted ter refuse, but thought better of it. W'ot's up?"

The men turned and entered a building at one side, and the sign over the door told that it was a real estate office.

"Mebbe there's only a real estate deal on, but I don't believe it. I want ter know more. Can I?"

Jim meditated and looked hard. Nobody was in sight, and the wagon made so good a cover that he resolved to use it. He moved forward and sheltered himself behind it.

He had hoped that this step would give him sight of the room inside, but, as it did not, he climbed upon one wheel for a further survey. Before he could decide if the plan was successful, steps sounded and he saw the driver round the corner.

"Crickey! I mustn't git ketched!" muttered the boy. "W'ot kin I do? If he sees me—"

He had an idea. The door at the rear of the wagon was open a trifle, and it was soon open more. Jim swung it back and sprang inside with a celerity that made him seem like a squirrel whisking about.

"Be I seen?" he wondered.

The driver came close to the wagon, but with an air that seemed to settle one question.

"He ain't seen me," decided Jim.

This appeared to be ground for congratulation, but, as the moments wore on and the driver kept his place the peddler was not so sure that he was glad of it.

"How be I ter git out?" he wondered.

It was a question of no small importance. The spy did not want any trouble and did not wish to pose as a meddler with anybody's business until he was sure of his position. These men might be all right, and if they were he was doing something contrary to law and right. But, this was not all.

Right or wrong, there was danger that he would be caught now, and that would bring difficulty upon himself.

He peered out at the driver, who was leaning complacently against the rear corner of the wagon box, and grimaced at him behind his back.

"Say, old skeesicks," his thoughts took

words, "why don't ye git a move on an' paint ye'r shadder on the other side of the street? Den me up here, will ye? I've a good mind ter pull all yer back hair out!"

Unconscious of the boy's presence, the driver kept his position, and James kept his.

The office door suddenly opened and several men came out, with a rush. James opened his eyes wide and then shrunk back into the wagon.

"By crickey! the dickens is ter pay!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER III. WILD ADVENTURES.

No wonder Jingo Jim was excited. The men who had come out so impetuously were not all on their feet. One of their number was carried in the arms of the others, and Jim saw that it was the stranger who had come to call on the sport.

He had been hustled out without ceremony, and his struggles were all in vain.

"Guess they are goin' ter do him up!" thought the boy.

Bang! The door of the wagon was thrown open by the driver, but the boy had sprung to the forward end, so was not seen.

The prisoner was shot in with one motion; the door banged to, and total darkness fell around Jingo Jim.

He was too much astonished to stir or to speak, but awaited with keen anxiety for what was next to happen. He had not long to wait, for the unknown man struggled up as far as the low roof of the wagon would let him, as he exclaimed:

"The dogs! They think they have me now—"

Clatter! clatter! clatter!

It was the clatter of horses' feet on the pavement, and the wagon began to jolt away.

"They want to kidnap me!" cried the unknown. "I will baffle that game right off!"

He threw himself against the door of the wagon, but it held fast, for it was bolted on the outside. The wagon was beginning to go at full speed, and time was precious, so he moved quickly forward, evidently hoping to find some way out there, and as a result he tumbled over Jingo Jim and they both fell together.

"What's this? what's this?" he exclaimed.

"It's a kid," explained Jim.

"What! are one of you in here with me? I will—"

He seized hold of the boy, but Jim broke in upon him:

"Git a move onter you, mister. I ain't none o' that gang—"

"You must be, or you would not be here. I will choke you—"

His hands were twined into Jim's collar.

"Drop it, you blamed fool!" shouted the peddler. "Want ter commit suicide onter the wrong feller? Shoot ye, I ain't none o' that gang!"

"Then who are you?"

"A prisoner."

"Why?"

"'Cause I'm a fool, I guess."

"How is that? But this is no time for delay. We are being whirled away at full speed. Ruthven Stanford is my enemy, and he will do me mischief if he can. We must get out."

Again the speaker threw himself against the door, but he made no impression. It seemed to be of iron. He began to pound on the walls of their prison.

"Say," asked Jim, "do ye expect they will pull up fer you?"

"The people on the street will hear me."

"Mebbe so; mebbe not. We make a pile of racket bowlin' along this way over the stones."

"True! true! The chances are against our being heard, I fear. What! Can we be kidnapped thus in the city of Brooklyn?"

"Can't say as ter that, but I know w'ot has been done."

"We will see. I will shout—"

He stopped making threats and used his lungs in earnest. He called for help until it seemed to them in their close prison that the streets must be full of the noise, but the wagon rattled on, and nothing came of their efforts to escape.

"Boy, who are you?" suddenly asked the unknown.

"Name, James Madison Moss; residence, near Chatham Square—"

"If I am killed, and you are not, tell the police that Aldrick Lee has succumbed to his foes."

"So your name is Aldrick Lee?"

"Yes."

"Has the sport done this?"

"The sport is named Ruthven Stanford, and he is a rascal of the worst sort—"

"Well, I should remark that he was! Say, be we goin' ter be killed or not? They've got us shut up like Central Park hyenas, an' now they will stroke our fur the wrong way. Be they goin' ter kill us, mister?"

"Doubtless I shall be killed."

"That's cheerful."

"Destruction seize Ruthven Stanford."

"Yes, an' it can't get a grip too quick. But, mister, et seems ter me et is us that destruction has got jest now."

"Boy, we must get out!"

"So we must!"

"We are being taken away at a rate which will soon convey us to whatever point our enemies have in mind. It mustn't be. Here, give your help, and let us throw ourselves against the door together."

"I'm with ye, general."

The two prisoners ranged themselves side by side, and in the same manner the rush was made. The door stood fast, and they were the only ones to suffer from the shock, but suddenly a small orifice opened above and a voice exclaimed:

"Keep still, or die!"

The prisoners looked up hurriedly.

"Crickey! he's got a revolver!" muttered Jim.

The light from above did reveal that much, but Lee was not to be cowed thus. He first made a forward rush to seize the weapon, but in vain, and then he cried out to the persons on the exterior.

"What do you mean by this vile work? Let us out, or—"

"Humph!"

Jingo Jim put in the exclamation in disgust as the small loophole above was closed with a bang. They were once more shut in, and the rapid progress of the wagon was not lessened.

"This is infamous!" cried Lee. "Must we endure such things? What kind of a wagon is this, that the frail top can't be broken open?"

"Frail, is it?" echoed Jim. "Well, ef you call sheet-iron frail that's jest the kind of a toothpick this place is, but I don't see it."

"Sheet iron?"

"Nothin' shorter."

"I do believe you are right. The thing has been specially prepared for me, and fixed up to suit. Boy, I don't understand why you are in this trouble? Does Ruthven Stanford fear you, too?"

"Boss, it's a clear case o' mouse and cheese, an' I'm the miserable mouse. Ef I had kept my hands off I wouldn't be inter it. Say, though, what is this sport that you call Ruthven What's-his-name?"

"A crook."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"Wot is his line?"

"Anything he can make a dollar at. He is too versatile to be sized in a few words."

"You ain't the same sort, be you?"

"I am an East River boatman. I claim to be an honest man, and if I am not a hard-working one I don't know what work is."

"Well, Mister Boatman, I ain't ashamed o' bein' in ye'r comp'. I ain't no millionaire myself. Shake!"

Jingo Jim's humorous fancy was not to be stifled by difficulties, and he really meant to shake hands, but, just as he tried to do it, there was a lurch of the wagon, and he and Lee were piled up together on the floor.

They scrambled up hastily.

"The morgue has stopped!" exclaimed Jim.

"Yes."

"Kin it be the police has got us?"

"More likely we are where they wanted to go with us. Boy, I am sorry you must suffer with me—"

"Be you goin' ter suffer?"

"I fear so."

"Let me go ter work while ye do it. I always yell when I'm misused, an' my cowardly egg-sample would upset you so much you would yell too—"

The door opened, and a light was flashed inside. The prisoners saw several muscular fellows outside, and Aldrick Lee recognized some of them as boatmen who had betrayed him. These men he had rowed with on the East River more than once, yet they had sold their souls to Ruthven Stanford when temptation came.

"Tumble out here!" ordered one of the party.

Lee did not stir.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"We want you!"

"You have compelled me to stay here thus far, and now I am willing to keep it up. The first man who tries to touch me will get hurt."

Ruthven pressed on.

"Fool!" he exclaimed, "come out!"

"I will not!"

"Then die!"

The sport drew a revolver and covered the boatman.

"Come out, or I fire!" he added, inexorably. "Will you live or die?"

CHAPTER IV.

DOOMED.

The boatman gazed at the revolver and seemed inclined to defy it, but Jingo Jim was not of that kind. He did not know what was before them, but he believed it could not be anything worse than the use of the gleaming weapon. He was about to put in a demurrer to Aldrick Lee's decision, when the latter changed his mind. He stepped forward.

"Have your own way thus far," he replied to Stanford. "I will come out."

"Jest my idee," added James. "I don't wan ter lose any lead in my interior department."

Aldrick emerged from the vehicle, covered by several revolvers, for four men were present. But all hostile eyes became fixed on Jingo Jim. Surprise was pictured on their faces.

"What have we here?" asked the sport.

"I'm a kid," distinctly answered James.

"How in blazes did you get into that wagon?"

"Blowed in."

"Nat, is he one of your helpers?"

This was to the driver, who promptly replied:

"Never see him before."

"Then how did he get there?"

"I'll be shot if I know."

"This is mysterious."

"So it is."

"In order to stop the palpitation o' ye'r hearts, I'll say that I jest sneaked in fer a snooze," added Jim.

"How was that?"

"Wagon stood empty; boy was sleepy; cause an' effect," explained the unabashed peddler from Chatham Square.

"What is your name?"

"Clarence Percy Montrose," coolly declared the peddler.

The sport turned to Aldrick Lee.

"Is the kid one of your crowd?"

"I never saw the boy until I was flung into the wagon, a few minutes ago," replied the boatman. "If you have evil designs on me, I beg that you will leave him out of them. He is not a friend of mine, and his youth calls for your pity—"

"Not a bit," declared Ruthven Stanford. "If we let him loose he will peach on us, and that is just as bad as if he was an ally of yours. He will be served as you are."

"Look here, Mister Man," exclaimed James, "who's running this bakin' shop anyhow? Who made you my guarddeen? I'm a free blown American citizen, an' you can't bluff me. See?"

"We lose time," added the sport, ignoring Jim. "Men, let us end this. Carry matters forward. Alf, lead the way. Lee, follow Alf."

So saying, the sport turned his revolver upon Aldrick, and the latter was again brought to face his peril. It was a serious one, unless the feelings at the bottom of the quarrel were less bitter than they seemed to be to Jingo Jim.

Lee had plenty of muscle, and he now stood with flashing eyes and looked hard at the sport. Muscular as the latter was, he did not look fit to cope with the boatman, and there might have been a different story to tell if the revolvers had not played their part. As it was, all of his defiance did not do Lee any good, and he was not foolish enough to waste words.

Stanford reached out one hand and pointed.

"Go!"

Lee swallowed, as if to clear away a big lump in his throat, and then turned and went silently after Alf. The sport seized Jim by the arm.

"Follow!" he directed, roughly.

Now, James was not so old as Lee, nor did he know how much in earnest this crowd really was, and when hands were laid on him so violently his angry passions rose.

"Lemme go!" he snapped.

There was no response, and Stanford continued to force him forward.

"Shoot ye! Take that, you measly skunk!"

Jim had borne all he wanted to, and now flew at Stanford like a young tiger. First of all, he hit the sport a blow in the eye, and followed it up with other blows that would have done credit to the best boxer in Chatham Square.

All that was necessary to make the whole thing a great success was ten years more on Jim's shoulders, but he was only a boy, and was more troublesome than dangerous. Nat pounced upon him, and, in a short time he was subdued, cuffed, punched in the ribs, and generally knocked out and disfigured.

No real harm was done him, but he was hurried along after the rest in a most unceremonious fashion.

Jim was a boy of pluck, but he began to feel somewhat worried. He was not well acquainted with Brooklyn, and did not recognize the locality where they were, but it looked pokerish and ominous to him. They were close to the water's edge, and he could see the river flowing just in front

of them. Further away—too far for his peace of mind—the lights of New York glimmered and seemed to send friendly and sympathizing greeting to him. But they sent it in vain.

All around the adventurers was a waste of sheds and other paraphernalia of water life, and the whole place appeared to be deserted of all men but themselves.

Dark and gruesome was the outlook.

Straight to the water went the party, but Lee began to resist.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"None of your business!" snapped Stanford.

"I will go no further."

"No?" sneered the sport. "We will see!"

He made a motion to his men, and they flung themselves upon the prisoners afresh. Both of the latter were hustled along rapidly. Lee called out for help, but no help came.

Jim had a chance to see an old craft of some sort by the water's edge, and then they were rushed upon its deck and down below. A light burned there. The captives were sent reeling, and then allowed a breathing spell.

They were in a little cabin—a mere den, Jim thought, for the craft was so small that there was no spare room anywhere for large rooms. Stanford laughed triumphantly.

"Boys, you have done nobly," he declared.

"Right!" agreed Alf.

"Neatly nabbed."

"Ruthven Stanford," exclaimed Lee, "I demand our release."

"All you have to do to get it is to make such a demand."

As the sport said this his companions broke into a hearty laugh, as if he had perpetrated a very witty retort.

"Do you intend to keep us prisoners?" asked Lee.

"You shall see."

"It will be better for you not to do it," cautioned the boatman. "Do you want to get into serious trouble? You 'ive a fast life, Ruthven Stanford, and I suppose you enjoy it. Brooklyn and New York alike know you as a sport of sports; you are a high-roller and a gambler of renown, and—"

"And I don't want any biographical notice from you. Drop it! How is it, men? Is all ready?"

"Yes," replied Nat.

"Wind up the job."

They advanced upon the prisoners.

"What would you do?" cried Lee. "Keep off!"

"Now!"

Stanford gave the order, and they leaped upon the captives. A fierce fight ensued. The muscular boatman did credit to himself, and Jim was not idle. He gave Alf a good deal of trouble before he was subdued, but, with him as with Lee, it was only a matter of time against such odds, and they were soon secured and bound.

Helpless, they were cast on the floor.

The sport looked at Lee with a malicious smile.

"Any message to send home, Al?" he inquired, mockingly.

"I have a request."

"Well?"

"It is that you will exempt this boy from any difficulty you propose to force upon me. He is not my man, and has done nothing to make himself obnoxious to you. Do with me whatever your evil desires suggest, but let him go free."

"I have no time to inquire whether he came into the case by chance or design, nor does it matter. He is in the case, and is just as dangerous in one case as the other. He will have to abide by his luck. We have no more to say."

Stanford turned to Nat.
 "Done?" he asked.
 "Yes."
 "Be off!"
 They turned to leave the cabin.
 "Say, old skeesicks!" cried Jingo Jim, defiantly, "I'll jest make your hide wrinkle when I git outer this."
 "Yes, when you do."
 "Yes, jest then, old gutter roller. You'll git it where Adam got the apple."
 "The time will never come. I may as well say that both of you are doomed. Death is near to you!"

CHAPTER V. IN GREAT PERIL.

Stanford did not get the satisfaction of hearing a reply, so he added after a brief pause:

"I did not intend to tell you, but the fact is this old sloop will soon be at the bottom of the East River, and you will go down with her. The craft is a deserted wreck, anyhow, and we have only had to bore a few holes in her hull to insure speedy sinking. The plugs have just been pulled out and the sloop will be floated. She will go out into the stream, float a few fathoms and then sink. So will you!"
 "This is infamous!" exclaimed Aldrick Lee.

"I am going to dispose of you!" asserted the sport.

"Scoundrel!"

"Call me what you will; it will not save you from sinking."

"At least, do not doom this innocent boy."

"He must drown, too."

"But he has no share in my work—"

"Let go the cable, Al," coolly directed the boy from Chatham Square. "Don't waste words on this old crook. He's too mean ter eat honey without turning it inter vinegar. Don't even speak ter the lantern-jawed old rat-ketcher."

"Boss," advised Nat, "we want ter git a move on. This craft will go and take us with it."

"Away!" ordered Stanford.

The plotters hustled out. Just at the last moment the sport paused and looked malevolently at the prisoners; then he moved on and the helpless pair were alone in the cabin.

Both were depressed and worried, and several moments passed without speech from them. Then James aroused.

"We are afloat!" he exclaimed.

"Stanford has kept his word," admitted Lee.

There could be no doubt of that. The sloop was swaying and bumping around as the water caught her dilapidated sides and tried to hold her up. That this could not long be done was certain, for her every movement told how much of a wreck she was.

"She tips up bad," added the peddler, after a pause.

"Yes."

"Any hope o' rescue, do you think?"

"Somebody may see us."

"But they wouldn't know anybody was in the cabin."

"True."

"How would et work ter yell like Kimanch Injuns?"

"Useless, I fear. We are all enclosed, and the way shut off for shouts to reach the outer world."

"Say, Al, look here! The water is comin' in!"

A light had been left burning, and if Jim had been looking at the boatman he would have seen the latter change color. Water was coming in, and not in a tiny rivulet, either. It came fast, and Lee muttered:

"It will soon be over."

"Say!" cried Jim; "be you goin' ter drowned?"

"What can we do?"

"Git yer lamps open an' you'll see w'ot I'll try ter do!"

Jim began a furious struggle with his bonds, and though it seemed wholly useless, Lee followed his example. They twisted and squirmed until they were tired, and then gave it up as a bad job, breathing hard and bruised around the wrists.

"Free bath!" muttered James, grimly.

The cabin had a liberal supply of water now, and it was washing the prisoners as the old craft lurched and plunged in her vain efforts to keep afloat.

"We must be in mid-river."

"Yes. Somebody may see us."

"Boy," seriously spoke the boatman, "I am exceedingly sorry you must suffer with me, when you are wholly innocent. You are so young—too young to die so miserable a death."

"Yes, an' too good," added Jim, with grim humor.

"I hope you will forgive me—"

"Crickey!"

Jim interrupted as the sloop gave a big lurch, which sent him and the boatman rolling into a corner in headlong style. They were bruised, but not badly injured.

"Good as a gymnasium," commented Jim, ejecting a load of water from his mouth.

"Our hour has come. I am an old river man, if I am young in years. I understand this well, and can gauge the passage of events well. About five more minutes—Ah! how the water pours in! It comes now in a flood! Hear it gurgle! Death is here!"

Jim was choking, but he managed to lift his head a little and eject the water again.

"Brace up, Al!" he gasped.

The boatman did not seem to have exaggerated. The sloop was pitching wildly and the water came furiously. It needed no expert to see that the craft must sink speedily.

There was a gurgle from Lee which told of his dire extremity. Up to that time James had been almost indifferent. His had not been a happy life and death was not to him as it was to others more favored. Now, however, thinking the boatman was about to die, he stirred into horror and desperate energy.

He began a new, a frantic struggle with his bonds.

Every muscle was strained to the utmost.

"It's bust 'em or die!" muttered the boy.

The gurgle was louder from Lee, who was in deeper water.

"Whoopee!"

Jim's bonds gave way, and he signalized the fact with a shout of triumph. His hands were free, and he whipped out his pocket-knife with wild haste. The blade was keen, and he severed the cords on his ankles quickly.

"Al, Al!" he cried.

The gurgle continued from the corner.

Jim leaped forward in the water, seized his companion and dragged him back.

"Brace up!" he cried, excitedly. "I'll git you out. Here I go!"

The heroic boy slashed at the boatman's bonds and they fell away without much trouble. Lee was floundering around and gurgling painfully, but Jim pulled him to his feet.

"Get a grip on yer cable!" cried the rescuer. "This is a game we can't afford ter lose. Hump yerself, Al! See! the measly old sloop is makin' bows ter

the brine with alarmin' politeness. We must skip or drink up the East River. Unlimber yer joints."

Lee blew the water out of his mouth vigorously. He had been near to death, but with the first breath of pure air he revived in a measure and all of his courage returned.

"We must go!" he gasped.

"This way. Hi! the companionway is blocked, but we must clear it!"

"Let me at it!"

The boatman spoke with vigor, and he dashed at the mass of obstruction. With the sloop still pitching wildly, he clawed away energetically, and Jim did his share. Such work could not fail to make a mark, and the peddler's voice suddenly rose in a jubilant shout.

"All clear! Here we go!"

They rushed out and were soon on the deck. Water was running over it, and it was a wonder the craft had stood up so long.

"We are in the middle of the river."

"No other boat in sight."

"Can you swim?"

It was Lee who asked the question, and Jim's reply was prompt.

"Kin I? Kin ye'r uncle saw wood? Why, I'm half duck an' the rest mermaid, I be. Come on, Al. Be you ready?"

"Yes. Quick! The sloop is going down!"

The adventurers leaped together. A sudden lurch of the craft sent them flying with erratic curves and they came down like lead, but both knew what to do. They began to swim, and with speed occasioned by the fear that the sloop would sink and drag them down with it through force of suction.

Not until they were several fathoms away did they pause, but Jim's voice finally rose cheerfully.

"Say, Al, it strikes me we are alive, ain't we?"

"Yes. And the sloop—she is still up."

"Look, look! She lurches again; she pokes her nose under water."

"She is gone!"

It was true. With a last gurgle and a good deal of commotion the vessel went under, never to rise again of her own volition. The river boiled above her as if to mark the grave of the wreck.

"Boy," spoke the boatman, gravely, "if we had been five minutes later we should not be alive now."

"Right, old man!"

"A close call. But we are in the middle of the East River. Let us strike out and get to land as soon as possible. Head for the New York shore and swim for it. Talk no more now."

It was good advice, and they went on with steady strokes. Aldrick found that his young companion was quite equal to the task, and no aid was required. Tired, but safe, they presently landed at a New York pier.

"This is glorious," declared Lee. "I never was so glad before to see the city lights."

"Ditto, me!" agreed James. "Now, I'm ready ter hear w'ot it's all about."

CHAPTER VI.

JINGO JIM'S HELPING HAND.

The peddler spoke with cheerful assurance, but Lee did not take the hint. He still regarded the streets before them with a peculiar expression on his face.

"Boy," he added, "you don't know how lucky you are to be a resident of New York. It is the greatest place on the face of the globe, and well may its people be proud of it."

"Correct, but let's defer thinkin' of it now. Some day we'll take a spell off an'

jest gloat over it. At present time, as I go ter press, I am curious ter know why we came so near bein' subjicks fer the fishes."

"I am in Ruthven Stanford's way."

"Why?"

The boatman hesitated.

"You will excuse me for now," he finally responded. "I do not under-estimate the debt of gratitude I owe you, but I want to think it over. Villain that I knew Stanford to be, I never dreamed he had it in him to do such a vile deed as this."

"You know it now."

"Yes. He is a gambler, race-track sharper and all around sport, and is well known in both of the Twin Cities. Look out for him—he has proved to be more than a man-about-town."

"I should remark."

"For now his grudge against me may remain secret, but I have no objection to telling you all, later on. Boy, you have saved my life."

"Seems ter me we was both inter it. We fit right alonside o' each other."

"All true enough, but you know very well that I had practically succumbed to the elements when you pulled me back into this world. I will not forget this of you. Give me your full name—"

"James Madison Moss, Esquire."

"And address."

Jim was not wholly in an amiable mood, for he felt that he should have been told more after he had done all he could for Lee, but he accepted the rebuff as cheerfully as possible and answered all that the boatman wanted to know.

The latter gave his own address, which was close to the East River, and then they wended their way homeward. Neither was any the worse for the late adventure, but Lee cautioned his young ally to keep clear of Ruthven Stanford.

Now that the sport knew him as a friend of Lee's he might do anything lawless to silence the boy.

In due time the pair separated and James went home alone. He was very matter-of-fact over his experience, and when he reached the tenement and found Bob, Simon Skiffsky and Isaac asleep he did not waken them. Hanging up his still wet clothes where they would dry to best advantage the peddler sought his bit of carpet.

He inwardly rebelled bitterly against the unjust luck that had deprived him of further luxury.

"I'm sure I can't sleep good without that saddle," he thought. "I got used ter et, an' et was a great thing fer tired bones. I didn't make no progress ter-night toward gettin' a clew ter the saddle, but I'll see 'em again. Denny Stone talked with a sport jest before I was robbed, an' ter-night I see Denny with Ruthven Stanford. Of course Stanford is the same sport in all this crooked biz, an' I'll haunt him until I git my saddle back or—"

Right here James fell asleep and his worldly affairs haunted him no more for some hours except in his dreams.

Our young friend was a thorough business boy, and the next morning he rose and went to work as usual. He said nothing to Bob and the other men of his adventures, and they did not suspect how close he had come to death.

All of that day he peddled the leaping kangaroo, and his luck was of the best. By night he had so much cash in his pocket that he was inclined to forget that he had been sick and to look upon the world as a very bright and inviting place to stay in.

More, he felt rich, and an idea came to him. He wandered, after business hours, to Chambers Street, and, pausing in front

of a store there, looked long and lovingly at a saddle displayed in the window. It tempted him.

"I'd like ter buy et, an' I believe I will in a few days. I need a piller ter sleep on, an' I need et bad. Some folks would prefer a reg'lar piller, but they never tried a saddle. When I git a bit richer I'll buy another saddle."

Tearing himself away, presently, the peddler went home and passed an hour with Bob, Simon and Isaac, but indoor life had less attraction for him than before his adventures.

He finally put on his hat and wandered down to Chatham Square.

"I may see that saddle," was his unspoken hope.

Nothing arrested his attention at first, but, later on, he noticed a group of men gathered further along and he went that way. In their midst was something which interested all, it seemed, and Jingo Jim was not indifferent to sensations. He managed to get partially into the group, so he could see and hear.

A breezy man had the center, and by him was a small board located on a convenient barrel. On the board were three little shells. The man suddenly held up a five-dollar bank-note.

"Now, gents," he cried, "I will place this bill under one of those shells, give them a little twirl, and then let any one of you guess which shell it is under. If you guess right the bill is yours."

Jingo Jim elevated his nose in contempt.

"A thimble-rigger!" he muttered. "His game is so old that every fly kid o' six years is onter it. He can't ketch nobody—"

A tall man moved closer to the supposed thimble-rigger.

"I'll try you once," he remarked.

"Done! Put up your own five—winner to have both."

It was done; the first bank-note was put under a shell and the trio of shells shuffled. Then the tall man guessed as to its location. He had named the right shell and the money was his. The thimble-rigger seemed crestfallen, and wanted to try again. They tried once, twice, and the guesser won every time.

"I won't give you another show," declared the thimble-rigger. "You are a mind reader, and it isn't fair to me. Any other gent want to try?"

Another "gent" did, and he moved forward.

"Grass!" muttered Jingo Jim.

It was his terse way of saying that the new risker was a country-man. He did look like it. He had an intelligent face, but his clothes did not fit and his hair and beard looked sadly in need of shears and a barber's grasp. He now had an air of profound wisdom which was impressive.

"I will hazard something with you once," he remarked.

"All right, but mind you, if you are another mind reader you will have but one go. Where is your fiver?"

The money was handed over; the shells were shuffled.

"Guess!" directed the thimble-rigger.

"This is the shell," replied the supposed countryman.

"Sure?"

"Yes."

The reply was quick, for the guesser had watched closely and believed that he had followed the right shell through all its movements when the three were being shuffled.

"What will you bet?"

"Ten dollars."

"Unless I have made an error you are wrong. I'll go you twenty dollars you are wrong."

The countryman pulled out the money.

"I'll do it."

"Hold up!" suddenly cried Jingo Jim.

"This is robbery. Stop it!"

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN WHO WANTS SOMETHING.

Everybody else grew spellbound as Jingo Jim followed up his cry by pressing further forward. Keeping a wary eye on the thimble-rigger, he again addressed the countryman:

"This is a skin game," he declared, "an' that man is a thimble-rigger. You put up any cash with him, an' you'll git salted. See?"

The manipulator of the shells waxed indignant.

"How dare you lie about me, you little cuss?" he angrily demanded. "I am a man of honor, and a ragamuffin like you can't bluff me. Get out, or I'll smash ye. See?"

Then he abruptly turned to the countryman.

"All right, I take your bet," he proceeded. "Here goes!"

He had deftly snatched the money, and the hesitating stranger was too late to back out if he wished.

"Pick your shell!" added the sharper.

"Don't do it, mister," urged Jim. "Get ye'r boodle back now, or you'll never get it. Ketch on ter ther cable."

The sharper was about to make a rush for the boy, but the victim made his decision.

"I'll try it," he replied. "I select that shell."

The thimble-rigger coolly lifted it. Of course there was nothing under it.

"Made a miss-guess, didn't you?" smiled the crook. "Better luck next time. I'll go you—"

"A cop!" exclaimed a voice near at hand.

"Cheese it!" cried the thimble-rigger, and he gathered up his shells with remarkable expedition. Another moment and he was dodging into the shadow of a building and hastening off.

"Say, nibsey," cried Jim to the victim, "be you goin' ter let his jags work this snap?"

The countryman seemed very much undecided. The crowd was breaking up, and the advancing patrolman saw no reason for haste in marching along his beat, so the coveted chance passed. Finally the victim answered:

"I really don't know—"

"I do," retorted Jim.

"Eh?"

"You might as well try to ketch last year's dew as him. He's gone, an' ye'r plunkers has gone with him."

"Say, boy, was there really anything wrong about that?"

"Not much."

"Then, why did you talk as you did?"

"All that was wrong was this: The first bettor was a pal o' the thimble-rigger, an' he was allowed to win ter draw you on. See? An' when you fell inter the net the boss o' the job was enough of a sleight-o'-hand performer ter shuffle them shells right under ye'r nose so that your lamps, an' nobody else's, couldn't foller the right thimble. Oh! Jugs Brown is a boss at that work!"

"Jugs Brown?"

"That was the thimble-rigger's name—so called because he was once a bartender—but, crickey! any six-year-old kid in New York could hev' spotted the game. It's old as the hills, mister."

"And have I been caught by such a trick as this?" muttered the victim, with a shamefaced air.

"Count ye'r cash an' see, mister."

There was momentary silence; then came an air of resignation.

"I will charge it up to experience, but I don't mean to lose that money wholly. My patients will have to pay for it when I get home."

"Be you a doctor?"

"Andrew Walker, M. D., Partridge Plains, Hamilton County, New York, and a fool! Put it all in!"

Jim chuckled gleefully. The joke amused him.

"Maybe we kin git hunk with Jugs Brown," he suggested, "unless you are goin' ter leave town soon."

"I shall be here for several days. Say, boy, do you know of a chestnut horse with a gray spangle on his nigh flank?"

"No."

"Ain't seen such a horse in your travels, eh?"

"No."

"I'd give a bigger pile to find him than that fellow relieved me of. In fact, I have come all the way to New York just to find that spangled horse."

"Want ter buy?"

"Not a bit of it. He is a stolen horse, and I want him back."

"Oh! Sure he's in New York?"

"I think so. Say, you look like a pretty sharp lad. I'll give you fifty dollars to find the spangled horse."

"How much if I fail?"

"Nothing," declared the doctor.

"Then we can't trade. My time is worth something, an' don't you forget it."

"Why, you don't work."

"Don't I? Mebbe you know more about it than I do. I'll hev' you understand I ain't no lazybones. Yes, siree, I'm a labor-in' man, an' I can't give nobody my time without decent pay."

The doctor regarded his companion more attentively.

"You are a shrewd-looking chap, and I suppose you know the city well. What do you want for your services?"

"A dollar a day, anyhow, an' a bonus ef I succeed."

"I'll give you fifty cents a day."

"No, you won't, doc; I don't hustle at them wages. Ef you like the breed, you kin find plenty o' men around Chatham Square who will work for that, but not skilled labor."

Jingo Jim threw up his head as he spoke. He was not in the habit of talking about skilled labor, but the term came to him just in time for use and he felt very proud of his effort. It was a complete success; the doctor looked awed, and he hastened to say:

"Maybe you are right. I've heard a good deal about your labor unions here in New York—I suppose you belong to them?"

James managed to avoid laughing, and he gravely answered:

"Yes, Chatham Lodge, Bowery Division, Chapter AB, U. L. A. O. F."

"Dear me, dear me!" murmured the doctor, quite overwhelmed. Then he added, with even more awe:

"I will accept your offer, and if you find that horse you shall have the fifty dollars as agreed upon, in addition to your day wages. I'll do more; if you are sick I will treat you free. I prepare a pill for the liver which is unrivaled in medicine, and it has done great cures in rheumatism, toothache, and corns, all of which seem to me to be mysteriously related to liver difficulties—"

He stopped short.

"My liver seems ter be doin' biz at the old stand in a pretty decent way," replied Jim, "but as fer corns—"

When Doctor Walker stopped it had been to turn his gaze toward the middle of the street, and there it remained fixed. Now he broke in on James explosively.

"Hello, you! Hello, there! Stop! stop!"

He waved his arms wildly, and started for the middle of the street, and Jim saw a horse moving smoothly along with a light-weight covered carriage behind him. A man was on the box, and he looked around as the doctor yelled so loudly.

"What's eatin' you?" asked the boy peddler.

"That's the spangled horse."

"You don't mean—"

But Andrew Walker was already on his way to the place where the outfit was proceeding so calmly. Walker was not calm—he was deeply excited, and he swung his arms and his legs at the same time as he rushed forward.

"Crickey!" murmured Jim. "Can et be he has spotted the spangled horse? I'll see et out."

The resolution proved to be harder to keep than he had thought.

For some reason the driver had no sooner taken in the scene fully, and noted the forward rush of the man from Hamilton County, than he gave his horse the whip and went bowling away rapidly.

The next moment there was a lively scene on the street. The carriage led a procession, and after it plunged the doctor with wild excitement pictured on his face and his whole body seeming about to fly to pieces, so violent were his exertions, and in the rear of all ran Jingo Jim, intent only on seeing the thing out.

The doctor did not confine his efforts to his legs, but set up a series of yells which would have done something decisive if any patrolman had chanced to be near.

"Stop! stop! Hold on, there! Wait an' let me speak to you. Say, hold up! Pull in that horse! Stop! stop! Wa—hoo—oh—ye—oh—h—h!"

He wound up with a discordant yell which had nothing but breath and dismay in it. There was cause for it—he had seen that he was not to be obeyed, and his wind was giving out.

The driver did not stop, nor did he dally. Giving his horse a few more cuts with the whip, he dashed away at such speed that the race was about over. He rounded a corner, and was soon perfectly safe. At about the same time the doctor caught his toe against a high stone of the sort New York is too much gifted with by far, and down went the pill-maker in the dust.

The frequenters of the vicinity had seen all this without offering aid, but Jim was true to his new friend, and the boy now arrived on the scene.

"Are you hurt?" asked the boy.

"Hurt? Not in my body, but I've seen the spangled horse and lost him again!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A STREET SKIRMISH.

The doctor was barely able to gasp the words. He was out of breath and strength, and he kept his place on the ground and panted like a dog after a long run.

"Be you sure et was the spangled hoss?" asked Jingo Jim.

"Of course I be."

"Why didn't you ketch him?" asked the peddler, maliciously.

"Ketch him? Great land of love! didn't I try? Didn't I run until my legs almost dropped off? But what was the use? I might as well have chased a comet. That horse isn't one to be run down by any man on foot. I've seen him, and now I've lost him. Oh, oh!"

"Cheer up, major! Don't get the blues. We will see him again."

Doctor Walker shook his head and groaned.

"You had better get up," suggested Jim. "You are getting all covered with dust, and it don't seem dignified for a man o' medicine."

"By gosh! you are right, and I'll stop it!"

The doctor scrambled up and brushed his clothes.

"I'd rather have given a hundred dollars than to lose that beast," he added, seriously.

"Is he so valuable?"

"I must have him."

"All right. I will help you out as agreed upon. I took a good look at the driver as we had him inter sight, an' I shall know him as well as the hoss ef I see him again."

"Good boy! Just you do this thing up successfully, and we won't haggle on cash. You shall be properly paid."

"All right, doc. Where do you put up?"

Walker mentioned his hotel, and, as it was not far away, Jim decided to walk that way with him. They started, following the same course pursued by the driver of the spangled horse. The doctor seemed to like to hear himself talk, and he kept up a constant flow of language. It told Jim nothing new, and did not interest him much, so he said but little.

They were in a part of the city not generally deemed safe by those who lived further up-town, but it was the old home and playground of the peddler, and he did not think it necessary to caution the doctor to look out for himself.

Finally the latter remembered that it was a part of his mission to watch always for the lost horse, and he grew alert and proceeded to carry out his plan. It was just after this that Jingo Jim caught sight of two men on the sidewalk, one of whom he recognized immediately.

He might have recognized the other if he had looked further, but he obeyed the first impulse as he saw Jugs Brown, the thimble-rigger.

"There's an old friend o' yours, doc," he remarked, smiling.

"Thunder! so it is!" cried Walker.

"You might call a policeman—"

James stopped as Walker abruptly shot ahead.

"He's goin' ter tackle Jugs!" exclaimed the peddler.

It was only a few paces, and Walker cleared the distance quickly. But a new surprise awaited James.

"Why, he grabs the wrong man! Crickey!"

The speaker broke in on himself. Walker had indeed seized, not Jugs, but the latter's companion, but it was not this that made Jingo Jim have his latest surprise. As the doctor whirled the second man around the boy ally met with a second recognition.

"Ruthven Stanford! he gasped.

It was, in truth, the Sport of the Twin Cities, and the same man who had lately placed Jim so close to death. He was dressed in fashion-deemed faultless in that section, and expensively, though he had the vulgar display of the man about town.

He appeared to be very indignant over the rough descent upon him.

"What do you mean, fellow?" he cried, sharply.

"I've got you!" exclaimed Walker.

"Got me? Well, you release me, or you will have more than you want. Leave go!"

"Where's that horse?" shouted the doctor.

"What horse, you fool?"

"The spangled horse."

"What rubbish are you giving me?"

"You are the man who stole it from Partridge Plains."

"I? I stole a horse?" cried the sport, waxing indignant.

"Yes, you!"

"Why, fellow, if you say that again, I will smash your jaw!"

"I do say it, you thief!"

"Take that!"

Ruthven swung his arm back, but just as he was about to shoot his fist forward, the arm was grasped from behind.

"Say, why not put him on a sloop an' sink him in the East River?" coolly demanded the person who had seized the arm.

Something about this address impressed Ruthven strongly. His arm fell by his side and he wheeled suddenly. He saw Jingo Jim, and the monumental cheek that is a part of the equipment of a sport went out like a candle. He changed color, and simply stared blankly at the boy.

"Guess you an' me hev' met before, mister," quoth James.

"Never!" declared the sport, trying to rally.

"Oh, we ain't, eh? Go ask the fishes how it is. Wanted ter drowned me, didn't ye? Wal, you see how it worked."

"I never saw you before."

"Mister Man, you are a liar!" bluntly asserted James.

"Yes, and he lies to me!" cried Doctor Walker. "He is the man who stole the spangled horse from Partridge Plains—"

"I never was in Partridge Plains in my life!" declared Ruthven.

"That's another lie!"

"It is a case of mistaken identity—"

"Just as if I would forget you!" snorted Walker. "We all marked you when you came to the Plains. You wear your hair several inches longer than most men, and we thought you were a Western cowboy when you come in among us. Forget you with that long hair? Never!"

"He does look like a cowboy," agreed Jim.

"This is all nonsense," persisted Stanford, nervously. "I don't know either of you. Accidental resemblance; no more."

"Accidental grandmother!" snapped James. "You are the galoot that tried ter do me an' Al Lee up, but we are still inter it. See?"

Stanford saw, and his experience with city life led him to understand, that his proper place of action was some distance away. Thus far good luck had kept any patrolman from appearing on the scene, but if one did appear it might mean serious harm to the sport. Let Jim make a charge against him, and he would sleep in a cell that night.

In this excited conversation Jugs Brown had been overlooked for the time, but he was quite as eager as Stanford to get away, and he hailed an order from his friend.

"Stop them!" cried Ruthven, suddenly.

The pair flung themselves upon Walker and Jingo Jim. Several blows were given with rapidity, and when it was all over both of the latter were sprawling on the sidewalk.

"Cheese it!" added Ruthven.

He dashed off, with Jugs at his heels, and they soon made themselves invisible.

Jim and the doctor had been roughly used, but the boy was soon on his feet. His eyes were somewhat dim, so he rubbed them and looked around eagerly.

"They're gone!" he lugubriously muttered.

Walker scrambled up, with his nose dripping a few red drops.

"Why didn't you ketch them?" snapped the doctor.

"I did ketch them, an' I ketched it!"

"You let them get away!"

"How about you?"

"I'm a fool and an idiot," roared the man from Hamilton. "I don't seem to be any good. Why, thirty years ago I was the best fighter in Partridge Plains, but now it don't take much of a man to thrash me. It must be the climate. Yes, that's

just what it is—my liver has got out of order."

He whipped a box out of his pocket, selected two pills, and swallowed them with avidity.

"Take some," he advised. "They will act on your liver, and ward off the ill effects of this fight."

"I pass, doc. Well, we've lost our men."

"Hang it all, so we have."

"Do you really mean ter say that the sport was the man who stole your spangled horse?"

"Well, I can't swear that he did, but he put in an appearance at the Plains just before the horse was lost. I will swear he was there, whoever stole the horse."

"Doc, I advise you ter put the perleece on this job—"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Walker.

"Why not? It's only a hoss-case—"

"Oh! but it is more—far more. Lost horse? Bah! Do you think I would leave my patients up in Hamilton County and come all the way down here just to hunt for a lost horse? Not by a long chalk! It is more, far more, and it is a matter of vital importance!"

"What?"

"I can't tell you that."

"W'ot is the need o' mystery?"

"It is impossible to explain, but I tell you life and death may depend on us. We must ketch the spangled horse!"

CHAPTER IX.

JINGO JIM'S MYSTERIES.

Doctor Walker was not a man of aristocratic appearance, but he had an intelligent face, and, though Jingo Jim was inclined to joke him at times, there was something about him that told the peddler he was not a mere green countryman, and not to be looked upon with disdain.

Now he was interesting the boy.

"Case o' mystery, is it?" inquired James.

"Mystery and life or death," added the doctor.

"Tell me all about it an' I kin help you—"

"No, no; it would not do!" hastily declared Walker.

Jim was silent. Ruthven Stanford began to look to him like a man of more than passing interest. Both Walker and Aldrick Lee had something in which the Sport of the Two Cities played an important part, and neither would tell what it was.

This was puzzling and attractive, and, now that the two cases had centered around Stanford, Jim arrived at a decision.

"I'll get right inter this game for keeps," he thought. "Then, when the bugle blows, I shall be in the hunt." With this he turned to the doctor and added: "All kin be fixed ter suit ye, mister, an' yer horse thief shall be winged an' bagged. I am jest about the kid fer the job, too, an' I'll keep along with the game until I end it, ef you remember our bargain on cash."

Walker quickly pulled out a dollar.

"Here is a day's pay in advance. Take it and do your best. I have heard it said that the street boys of New York are about as sharp as anybody can be, and you have a shrewd face."

"It was the best I could buy when I was at the market," replied Jim, seriously.

"You are an eccentric youth, but that does not lessen your value. I want you in my service right along."

"I s'pose you would like ter see Sporty Stanford again, wouldn't ye, mister?"

"Yes."

"Maybe I can find him for you. I'll try a raid on him, anyhow."

James was about to mention Aldrick Lee and ask if the doctor knew him, but he thought better of it. He ranked the boatman above Walker, and was inclined to give Lee the first chance.

The doctor felt his hurts somewhat, and when Jim suggested that he go to his hotel and put in the night in peaceful rest, there was no opposition. Jim saw him inside the door, and then the latter turned away briskly.

"I'm off ter see Al!" he muttered, emphatically.

As quickly as possible he made his way to the extreme East Side, and, reaching the boatman's residence, he rang and asked to see Aldrick. He was disappointed; he was informed that Lee had gone out at dark, and had not returned, nor was it known when he would be home.

"My name is Got-left!" murmured James, as he moved off. "Can't compare notes ter-night. Sorry, fer Al ought ter know that Sporty Stanford is aware that at least one o' his victims escaped from the river. Ef the sport makes a brace fer Al, he may get it where Adam got the apple."

He did not know of any way of reaching Aldrick that night, especially as he had heard the latter say he often worked at his calling somewhere along one of the twin rivers at night, so he wended his way toward Chatham Square.

He was proceeding along a side-street, when he chanced to look up toward the sky—why, he did not know, except that it was an impulse and that he followed it.

"No moon, but sky clear as a girl's complexion," murmured James, poetically. "I reckon we shall have a fair day—"

He stopped short in both his speech and his steps, and then added, in a different tone:

"W'ot's that?"

He was nearly opposite a shed which was used as a coal office. Next to this structure was a three-story brick dwelling house, and right there was the something which puzzled Jim. The latter building presented a bare wall on the side next to the shed, and first view would have led one to think there was no break in the wall.

Jim had discovered more than this. He had seen something white fluttering up close to the house-top, and it impressed him.

"It's gone," he added, after a pause. "but I believe I kin see a small winder there—jest about big enough fer a baseball ter go through handy. Yes, et's a winder, an'—hey!"

The white thing fluttered again, and this was not all.

"I kin see a human face, and there's somebody wavin' of a white cloth. W'ot does et mean?"

A hand came out of the window and seemed to beckon to him.

"I'll be jiggered ef I don't think somebody is in trouble up there. Like as not they are shut in by accident, an' can't git out, or it may be somebody is held prisoner there. The stars shine pretty bright, but the winder ain't big enough fer the person ter make much show."

Now, James had a heart in his breast which beat with sympathy for all who were in need, and when he arrived at the conclusion that such a case was before him, he threw all personal interests to the winds and began to plan how he could best aid the unlucky stranger.

The result was that he walked up to the coal-shed, took hold of its rough side and began to climb. He reached the roof without difficulty, and was so much near-

er the stranger, but there he seemed quite as useless as he was below.

He could not see so much, and was unable to climb up the brick wall. He meditated and then acted.

"Hullo!" he called, softly.

There was no reply.

"Here I be!" he pursued.

Only silence above him.

"I say, up there, wot in blazes be you so mum fer? Ef you want any help, say et quick."

A whisper floated down to him.

"I dare not speak. Come up closer."

With this there was a total disappearance from the window, and Jim looked bewildered.

"Come up closer!" he repeated. "Say! be I a bird? Ef so, where are my wings? This ain't my week fer flyin'—well, I should chirrup!"

Again the hand came out of the little window and seemed to beckon to the boy, and Jim grew more and more interested. He did not want to desert anybody who was in trouble, but how was he to help this stranger as matters were situated?

"Say!" he repeated; "can't you sing out as ter wot is wanted—"

"Hush!" was the caution. "Come up on the roof, an' then I kin talk with you."

The stranger disappeared and Jim shook his head.

"I reelly am expected ter fly, an' my wings ain't good fer nothin' in the case. Still, I hate ter give et up. I should say et was a female woman, or small girl, an' I do hate ter leave such in trouble."

Further survey gave him a clew to the meaning of the request from the supposed girl. There was a water-pipe by the corner, and the use of this would certainly land him on the roof, if he could climb it.

"I kin try," he muttered, "but I don't doubt that there will be a funeral in my neighborhood by ter-morrer. It's risky, an' I am a sorter precious package. But, by gum, I am going to give et a try."

There was no sign of his new acquaintance, so he went to the corner and tried the water-pipe. It seemed to be quite firm, and he hesitated no longer.

Grasping the pipe firmly, he began to climb.

It was not long before he discovered that his venture was a dangerous one, but he did not hesitate. Swinging between sky and earth, he progressed as fast as possible.

"Stick tight, J. M. Moss," he urged, "or this will be ye'r funeral."

CHAPTER X.

STARTLING EXPERIENCES.

Jingo Jim's strength stood him in good service, despite his apprehensions, and he drew near the roof. With one last effort he drew himself fully up, and was on the nearly flat surface.

"Here I be," he commented. "Didn't expect ter turn sky-traveler this week, but you can't always tell when you will rise in the world. I am high up now, an' ef difficulty should come all of a sudden I am thinkin' it would go hard with ye'r uncle Jim ter git down without breakin' his neck."

Regaining his breath a little, and making sure that he was not under watch of hostile eyes, he rose to his feet. All was as still up there as he could wish for, and, though the scuttle door close at hand was suggestive of possibilities, it was closed and did not threaten mischief then.

"Now fer my honeysuckle at the window!" he murmured.

He moved forward to the edge of the roof, and lay down with his head and neck pushed forward. He was only a yard

above the little window, but he could see nobody there.

"Hullo!" he whispered.

Nobody answered.

"Hullo, central!" he repeated.

He had it all to himself.

"Now, see here," he added, aggrieved, "ef you hev' made me all this trouble fer nothin' you ain't no true Julia-ett, an' I'm a fool Romero, as sure as guns. I say, hullo!"

He was rewarded by hearing a slight stir.

"Hullo!" repeated the adventurer.

"Is anybody there?" came the answer, at last.

"No," replied Jim, in disgust. "I come ter tell you I couldn't climb up."

"Oh, let me out, won't you?" cried an eager voice.

"Sure! Go it, immediate."

"I am shut in."

"Open the door."

"It is locked."

"Why?"

"Mother Mag did it."

"Be you a kid?"

"Yes; I am a girl, 'leven years old."

"Better obey yer ma."

"Mother Mag ain't my mother, an' she is a wicked woman. She will kill you if she ketches you."

"She must be a pleasant old lady ter meet. Where does she bury her dead? Does she give them gravestones?" coolly asked James.

"Don't you let her see you, or you will need a gravestone—you will so!"

"Let us come ter biz. Idle talk is obnoxious ter a business gent. Wot is your name?"

"Kate Floyd."

"Wot hev' you ter do with Mother Mag, and vice adversity?"

"What?"

"Oh, that is a Latin term that girls ain't s'posed ter understand. Wot has she ter do with you?"

"I work fer her, that's all."

"Does she have ter shut yer up ter make ye do it?"

"She ain't shut me up before, an' I ain't workin' now, but she has got scared o' me an' shut me inter this room. I can't get out, an' I am dreadful afraid she will kill me."

"Miss Kate, this is serious, an' it can't be allowed. This old catamount of a Mother Mag had better come down off her perch. I will proceed ter get you out, an' then you can go before a police court an' make charges against the female pirate. Kin I git down the scuttle?"

"Don't try it! Don't you come in here or she will do you up, too. You just go an' get a policeman."

"Some would do it that way," calmly agreed James, "but I am in the habit o' workin' lone hands. I am comin' in ter rescue you, so get ye'r bunnit on an' pack up ye'r silks fer movin'. Good-by until I get inter the scuttle—"

Jim was talking very cheerfully, but he suddenly stopped short, interrupted in a most emphatic and unpleasant manner. One moment his tongue was flying glibly; the next, he felt rough hands on his ankles, and, before he could even turn to see what was the difficulty, he was dragged backward violently, his face and stomach scraping along the roof.

"Hey!" he cried. "Wot has broke loose?"

He was not allowed to see, but, without any pause, he was dragged to the scuttle and dropped down. He went thumping along the steps of the ladder, and then brought up on the floor with a fresh thump.

All this was trying to his nerves, but he was aroused thoroughly, and he scrambled to his feet hastily. A light burned close

at hand, held by a bony old woman, and a man was hurrying down the steps. A look at the face of the woman was enough to convince the boy peddler that he had fallen into evil hands, for she was the owner of a face bad in all ways, but as the man showed up more fully, Jim had a fresh shock.

He recognized Jugs Brown, the thimble-rigger.

Jim looked for a loophole of escape, but none presented itself, so he had to stand his ground. Both of his new companions gazed at him sharply. Jugs did not recognize him, however.

"Is this all we have nabbed?" he asked, in disgust.

"All?" repeated the woman.

"Yes."

"Do you call it all?"

"He's only a kid."

"If there is anybody that can make a pile o' trouble it is a kid, me-lad. They have sharp ears, an' they just go an' tell all they know. That is what this one would have done if we hadn't nabbed him."

"You are probably right. Anyhow, we have cut off his talk with Kate, and we will see that he don't tattle."

"Yes, for he won't leave here."

"See here, mum," interrupted James, "wot fer a picnic is this? I ain't outer ye'r curves. Why hev' I been snaked inter hock this way?"

"So we can shut you up an keep your mouth still."

"My mouth is a sleepy feller, anyhow, but that ain't the point. I am here, but was I invited? Did you send out cards in due style?"

"Shut up!" growled the woman. "The long and short of it is you have meddled with what ain't none o' ye'r business, an' you see what has come of it. Take him this way, Jugs."

"I protest—"

James began to speak with emphasis, but Brown gave him no time to finish his plea. He seized the prisoner and pulled him violently along until the next room was reached. This seemed to be the living room of the family, and Jim was forced into a chair and still menaced by Jugs.

"What do you make of him?" asked the latter.

"Spy," tersely replied the woman.

"From whom?"

"Oh, I didn't mean he was sent. He is only one of the idle good-for-nothings of the block. He tried to be funny, and got the worst of it, I reckon."

"Then you think him but an idle meddler?"

"No more."

Jugs did not appear to be wholly satisfied on this point, but he refrained from argument.

"We have him—what shall we do with him?"

"Keep him until the lad comes, an' let him pass judgment. Possibly," she added, looking at Jim malevolently, "we shall have to kill the spyin' little brat!"

Jim was not ready to be killed, and he began an elaborate argument and assertion of innocence, but he was wholly ignored, and not long allowed a chance to talk. The woman, who proved to be Mother Mag, was clearly the ruling spirit there, and, as she had decided that Jim was no more than a casual meddler, the latter was not subjected to such a searching examination as would otherwise have been the case.

He was hustled into a small room which led off of the large one, tied to a bed, and left to his own thoughts. It was not a pleasant occupation.

"Well, James Madison Moss," he muttered, "you hev' gone an' got ye'rself inter trouble this trip. The cable car has gone

an' you ain't even on the same street with it. Pretty fix! Oh, James, when will you learn ter mind ye'r own biz?"

It seemed to be wise questioning, but it did not relieve his mind in the least. He tried his bonds, and found them too strong to be broken, so he gave it up.

The door leading to the other room was not wholly closed, and he could look out. Mother Mag and Jugs sat down and enjoyed a smoke together, and the prisoner seemed to be forgotten. Half an hour passed, and then the old woman leaped to her feet.

"The lad!" she exclaimed.

A door opposite to Jim's prison opened and a man entered the room where the woman and Jugs sat.

"Great guns!" gasped the boy.

Until that moment the prisoner's phlegmatic nature had enabled him to keep outwardly cool, but he was frightened, at last. Taking the past as a guide, the future looked very threatening.

The new-comer was Ruthven Stanford.

CHAPTER XI.

JIM'S OLD ENEMY.

"By crickey! I guess I'm gone up now!"

Jingo Jim muttered the words, and there was no disputing the fact that his situation had grown serious. Ruthven Stanford was there, and it was certain that he would be told of the capture made by Mother Mag and Jugs, and if he did not want to look at the prisoner it would be strange.

It quickly became clear that the sport was not in good humor. The old woman swooped down upon him, and her usually coarse face changed perceptibly.

"Welcome, laddy!" she cried. "Sight av you is good for sore eyes. Here is a chair, deary; come an' take it. Are you hungry? Sure, I'll set out the best the house has."

Stanford threw himself down in the chair viciously.

"Let me alone!" he growled.

"But you must be hungry. I have some corned beef and cabbage—"

"To thunder with it! I have just had a Welsh rarebit."

"Well, a cup of tea."

"No."

"My poor dear, you are all tired out and sick. Sure, Tim, you work too much—"

"That will do," snapped Stanford.

"How often must I tell you not to call me Tim? My name is Ruthven Stanford."

"Your name was Timothy when you lay on me lap an' infant, an' the name was your father's, an', sure, it was good enough for him, an' it ought ter be fer you."

This assertion came angrily from Mother Mag, but she quickly repented of her severe arraignment. Again assuming her tender air, she added:

"But I forgot you have gone up in the world. Your father an' me was humble people, an' anything was good enough fer us—even plain names—but your mother loves you, deary, an' she can see you are a grand man now—handsome and rich, deary—and, sure, nobody rejoices more than I do. I am proud av me son. Yes, an' I'm proud av your position in society, an' the way you hev' gone up in the world from the humble attic where I reared you—"

"I may go higher yet."

"Sure, is there hope?"

"Hope!" repeated Ruthven, sarcastically. "Yes, the same hope that all men have who see the electric chair before them."

"Ouw!" cried Mother Mag, shrilly.

"Have you killed somebody?"

"Oheese it!" snapped the sport, angrily.

"Will you call in the pollee? No, I ain't killed anybody, but this game is running far from the still waters. That Aldrick Lee may do me up yet."

"Is he tryin'?" demanded the old woman, her eyes blazing.

"I don't know, but I rather wish I had kept my hands off from Lee. The game is making too much trouble and bringing me too much risk. I wish I had kept out of it."

"But that would have let Lee get the money."

"He will probably get it now."

"Laddy, will you give it up?" cried Mag, her eyes flaming anew.

"No."

"Then why do you say he will get it?"

"Never mind."

If Ruthven had explained he would have referred to his effort to put the young boatman out of the way, and his serious doubt that he had succeeded, and the fears of consequences. As his mother did not know of his attempt on Lee's life, he revealed nothing now.

"It is a bitter shame that Al Lee should come between you and yours!" cried Mag, warmly. "He hasn't the right, an' I will kill him with me own hands before he shall rob my laddy!"

"Say!" interrupted Jugs Brown, suddenly. "we have forgotten one thing, aunt Mag."

"What?"

"The boy!"

The old woman leaped to her feet.

"Sorry the hour!" she cried, "that kid may have heard all we hev' said here."

"What kid?" asked Ruthven.

"We caught a boy spyin' on us, an' so we seized him, an' he's here now."

"Here? Where?"

"In the next room."

"And we have been cackling like geese! Malediction! What have you been thinking of, woman?"

"I forgot the kid," replied Mag, whinily.

"So did I," added Jugs.

"I'm a gone goose!" muttered Jingo Jim, in his prison. "They will come in now, an' Sporty Stanford will recognize me, an' then it will be worse for me than Daniel in the lions' den."

Ruthven was alarmed, and he pursued his interrogations.

"Who is the boy?"

"Only one av the kids o' the neighborhood," replied Mag, anxious to shield herself from censure.

"Oh! What was he doing?"

"Talkin' with Kate. I suppose it was somebody that knew her, an' kids will meddle, ye know."

The sport looked relieved. It had not occurred to him to connect the meddlesome boy he knew of with this news, for it would have appeared too wild a possibility to be considered, but the remark that the prisoner was one of the boys of the neighborhood had relieved him not a little.

"We shall soon have a houseful of captives," he grumbled. "Never mind, though; we won't stay here long ourselves. One of these fine nights we will fly the coop, and then they can starve here for all I care."

The trio drew to one side and began to talk in tones too low for Jingo Jim to hear anything. He was temporarily saved from meeting the eyes of the sport, but this did not make him feel at ease. If Ruthven did not come in to take a look at him later on it would be a wonder, and danger still loomed up ominously.

"Why can't I get out o' here?" murmured James. "This is a measly fix, an' I shall not peddle no more jumpin' kangaroos unless I git a hustle on right quick."

He wrestled with his bonds again, but they were too much for him.

"Ef I only had a knife," he thought, wishfully.

He had one, but it was in his pocket. He did not see how he could get it. Next, he considered the possibility of biting the cords in two, but when he tried it he found he could not get his teeth upon the cords.

"It's the knife or nuthin'!" he decided.

Danger makes people persistent, and he began to twist and squirm to accomplish his ambition. He could hope for help from nobody else, and he dared not pause to think seriously on what Ruthven Stanford would do when he learned who the prisoner was.

Jim twisted until he bade fair to tie himself up in a hopeless knot, but for a time it seemed useless. Finally, however, he succeeded in working a hand into the pocket where the knife was. He grasped the precious article; he brought it out; he managed to open it.

"Crickey!" he thought, exultantly, "all hope ain't gone yet. Ef I can't saw off these cords, I am a clam."

He began the attempt, but his position was such that he could not work to advantage. He drew the blade, and, though several twinges of pain told him that he was carving away at his wrists, as well as the cords, he kept it up.

Suddenly his face grew radiant. There was a sudden loosening of the pressure on his wrists.

He pulled lustily; the cords fell away!

"By gum! I guess I'm in the swim!" he murmured.

A few more strokes of the knife and he was wholly free. Victory was his, thus far, and he turned to the future.

"Now," he thought, "how kin I git out? I don't want no skirmish with them, so I will make a soft-footed campaign of it. I must sneak out on the dead quiet—"

Just then Ruthven stirred in the next room and rose from his chair. Some matter which had been under discussion was settled. The sport yawned widely.

"I must get to bed and to sleep," he remarked; "but, before I go, I will look at your boy prisoner. I want to see what he is like. It is best for me to size him up fully, though I doubt not he is some meddlesome neighborhood kid, as you say. Bring him out!"

"Great guns!" muttered Jingo Jim, aghast.

The meaning of this new turn of events flashed upon him. The sport was still unsuspecting, but if he once saw the peddler it would be very different.

"I have got ter do somethin'!" exclaimed James. "What? What can I do? They mustn't git their grippers on me—I must run!"

It was an abrupt decision, but, really, the only one open to him. He had noticed that the gang had not locked the door by which Ruthven entered, and, of course, that door led to the open air.

"Here goes!" cried the prisoner.

He flung the door of his own room wide open and dashed out. All of his foes were on their feet, and they stared in blank wonder at his appearance.

"Good-night!" shouted Jim, and he dashed toward the hall door.

CHAPTER XII.

JINGO-JIM'S BIG SURPRISE.

Jingo Jim had hoped that he would not only be able to escape, but to avoid recognition, but Ruthven Stanford had sharp eyes. The trio of conspirators all looked surprised for a moment, and then the sport's face lighted up.

"Lee's boy!" he exclaimed.

James did not pause to argue the point. He was making long steps toward the hall door, and now stretched his legs all the more.

Jugs Brown was nearest to the door, and, as he recovered a little from his bewilderment, he lurched forward and seized the fugitive. The latter found his collar grasped firmly, and, as he had not time to plan or act, he was checked in his flight and nearly pulled over into Jugs's arms.

"I've got you!" exclaimed the captor.

"Lemme go, you old crook!" shouted James.

Ruthven stalked forward.

"Let me settle this!" he cried. "I know this boy, and he and I have a debt to settle—What?"

The sport broke off short. Jingo Jim was not in a mood to settle debts in the way indicated by Ruthven, and he played a trick often practiced among his boy companions in safer moments. With an agile movement he squirmed out of his coat, leaving the garment in Jugs's hands, and then made another rush for the door. This time there was nobody in the way. Jim tore the door open and dashed out into the hall.

The place was but dimly lighted, but it was enough for him to discover the stairs, and he made use of them promptly. Down he went with leaps so long as to endanger his neck, but he heard the pursuers clattering along in the rear and he did not lessen the length of his stride.

Doors were opening here and there as others heard the clatter.

"What is it?"

"Fire!"

"Thieves!"

"Call the police!"

These cries, rising here and there, did not quiet the fugitive any, and he kept on until the lower floor and the outer door were reached. He flung the door open and hastened out.

He was on the street with the blue sky above him and all New York for a field in which to seek safety. He sought it with despatch, and made no pause until he had run to the end of the block. There, seeing that he was not closely pursued, he relapsed into a walk.

"Well, James Madison Moss," he muttered, "you hev' had a pretty close rub. If you hadn't been a regular Sheepshead Bay sprinter you would hev' got snagged the worst way, an' got it where Adam got the apple."

The danger was over, and he did some thinking.

"Guess I may as well call on Aldrick Lee again," he decided. "He ought ter know how things is goin' on, or he may ketch it as much as I hev'. I'll call at his headquarters."

Jim went, but Lee was still absent, and the warning could not be given. The peddler had not forgotten the girl prisoner, and he considered how he could help her. In his business career he had received more unfriendly words than kind ones from policemen, and he did not have faith in the craft. He dared not go to a station now, but he did go to a safe place, write a note informing the department of the fact that a girl was thus held prisoner, and send the note to the nearest point.

This done, he went home, spread his bit of carpet out near Bob, Isaac Levy and Simon Skiffsky, and sought slumber. He slept heavily until late in the morning, and rose refreshed and ready for action.

For the time being he was not a peddler, but an employe of Doctor Andrew Walker, so he went to the doctor's hotel. Meeting that gentleman he briskly announced:

"I'm all ready ter hunt fer the spangled hoss, mister."

Walker rubbed his chin meditatively.

"Say!" he presently replied. "Is there

any place in New York where I can buy a second-hand saddle?"

"W'ot?"

"A second-hand saddle."

"W'ot in the world do you want o' that thing?"

"It's like this. When I first began to practice medicine I went in as assistant to an old man who was getting shaky through his age. The country up that way was new then, and roads were bad. As a result, the old doctor always used a horse and saddle and let wagons severely alone—didn't use them at all. Of course, I took up with the same practice, and I have kept it ever since. I still ride on horseback to see my patients."

"But why do you want to buy—"

"I need another saddle."

"Why do ye want a second-hand one?"

"It is nearly as good, and I am not so young as I was once."

"Doc, you don't face me frankly; you are keepin' somethin' back. W'ot is it?" blurted James.

Walker moved uneasily, and then blurted out:

"Hang it all! I want to find a saddle I have lost!"

"Oh!"

"Yes. All this talk about the spangled horse is nonsense. Such a horse has been stolen, but it never was worth over a hundred dollars in Partridge Plains, and nobody need think I—an M. D.—would take all this trouble for that spangled creature. But the saddle—that is what I wish to find."

"An old saddle?"

"Yes, well worn; very shabby."

"Doc, come right out with it. You wouldn't take no trouble fer a hundred dollar hoss, but you would fer a shabby saddle. Why?"

Walker gave another twist in his chair, and then abruptly cried:

"Why, you see there is something inside of that saddle. That is where the value lies; right inside it. Boy, I must have that saddle."

Jingo Jim's eyes were wide open and brilliant.

"Describe it!" he requested, quickly.

From his pocket the doctor took a paper, and then he proceeded to read a long and careful description. When he was done he looked up over his glasses at his companion.

"That is how it looks, and—why, what's the matter with you?"

"Doc!" cried the boy, excitedly, "I've seen that saddle!"

The man from Hamilton leaped to his feet.

"You have? Where? When? How?"

"Wal, as fer that 'how,' I seen et with my lamps, but the rest ain't so favorable—"

"Take me to the saddle at once!"

"Delighted, I'm sure, but I can't do it. The measly thing has sorter slipped away from me."

"What do you mean? Speak quickly; do not keep me in suspense any longer."

"I won't. I owned that saddle once, an' used et fer a pillar as long as I had it—"

"Don't trifle with me, boy. This is no joking subject."

"Just my view of it, doc. Now, you hold yer hosses an' hear the facts o' the case. I will soon put you onto the whole game as fur as I know it, though that won't be much of a gain."

Thereupon Jim told how he had acquired the saddle, used it for a pillow for a few hours, and then been mysteriously robbed of it. Walker listened with ill-concealed impatience.

"Who could have taken it?" he demanded.

"Ruthven Stanford, Jugs Brown and company."

"Stanford—the same man who was up in Partridge Plains?"

"Yes, sure."

"Thunder! I do believe you are right. Hurrah, my lad, we are on the track, and we will have that saddle or bu'st! Victory is near!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TWIN CITY TRAIL.

The good doctor was so excited that he leaped to his feet, rushed across the room as if in pursuit of the coveted saddle, and was proceeding to do other eccentric things when he suddenly recovered his wits a trifle and returned to Jingo Jim. He shook the boy's hand.

"Victory is near!" he repeated.

"I wish the saddle was the same," replied James.

"We will find it."

"Then all this talk about the spangled hoss ain't meant much, but the searchlight is wanted on the saddle. You say there is somethin' inside the saddle. What is it, doc?"

"I can't tell you now, but when we get it—Say, can it be the same saddle? Why should Stanford part with it, after so much trouble to get it? There must be a mistake; it is a different saddle. How about the man and the horse you saw when you got your saddle? Were they the same as Stanford and the spangled horse? But, no; your horse died—or he may have come to life after you secured the saddle. Describe the man and the horse."

"The man wasn't Stanford."

"No? Sure? And the horse?"

"Was dead, sure; an' it wasn't never a spangled horse."

Walker was not willing to be convinced, and he had many questions to ask of Jim. The latter had not forgotten the comments of the crowd as he stood by the dead horse that evening. None of them agreed with what Walker said of the spangled horse.

The latter had been a plump beast that would weight not over nine hundred pounds in good condition. The dead horse had been thin of flesh, and, according to the crowd, would have weighed thirteen hundred pounds in condition. More, his color did not correspond, and Jim was emphatic in thinking that it was sure he was not the spangled animal. Still further, he was sure the "dead horse" had been dead, and, according to the doctor, the spangled one had been seen the night before.

"But the saddle can't have been mine," persisted Walker. "It was in somebody else's hands, and Stanford surely would not have parted with it, after all his trouble to get it."

"Suppose he had took out the vallerables?"

Again the doctor leaped to his feet.

"Horrors!" he cried.

"Or maybe he didn't know of the treasures in the saddle."

"Why take it, then?"

"Now you've got me."

"It is discouraging."

"Keep yer courage a-glimmerin', doc. You see, this Ruthven Stanford, or Tim, as his real name seems to be—"

"His real name is Tim."

"Tim Alberts?"

"Can't say as fer his other name."

"If his name is Tim why haven't you told me before? I suspected that this might be the case some time ago. I had no means of knowing how Tim Alberts looked, and though I saw the man Stanford when he was in Partridge Plains, I did not think of connecting him with

Tim. When I knew how the horse had been stolen my suspicions were aroused. I was aware that Tim Alberts had gone West and was a cowboy there, and as Stanford had long hair and a general Western air, I've mistrusted it was more than chance. Why didn't you tell me Stanford's real name was Tim Alberts?"

"I didn't know et, an' I don't know et now. I found out last night that his name was Tim. The rest I didn't know—it might have been Tim Bluebeard, fer all I knew."

"He's the man!" declared the doctor. "Now we begin to get into shape. How are we to carry on our case?"

Jingo Jim's old antipathy to policemen kept him from suggesting the advisability of securing their aid, and Walker did not speak of it, either. They planned for playing their lone hand, but, as nothing else occurred to them, it was decided that they should make a general hunt, first reconnoitering the home of the sport.

They went that way, only to find that Ruthven, Jugs and Mother Mag had slipped quietly away, taking little Kate and all their furniture. They had made themselves invisible with expedition.

All that day James and the doctor hunted, but without success. At night the boy made a suggestion, the result of which was that Walker remained in New York to search through the evening, while Jim took his way to Brooklyn.

Sitting in a Bridge car as they rolled along over the East River, the young peddler meditated on the situation.

"It may be all a wild-goose chase," he admitted, but Sporty Stanford had to go somewhere, an', as he is said ter herd, jest as much in Brooklyn as New York, why may he not be there now?"

There was but one clue to the place where Ruthven might possibly be, so, though that did not seem hopeful in the least, James took his way to the real estate office where he and Aldrick Lee had become prisoners in the wagon.

At that hour of the evening business was suspended, but a boy of about Jim's own age was just closing the office up, and the citizen of the Chatham Square region hastened to his side.

The office boy was very trim and neat, but Doctor Walker had replaced Jim's lost coat with one quite expensive, and the New Yorker was not snubbed now.

"Say, cully," he began, "who does biz here, anyhow?"

"Mr. Pentecost Ikes," replied the office boy.

"That's a queer name, but so is mine—I am named Constant Arms. Funny name, ain't it? Well, about Ikes. He's young, ain't he?—say about thirty—"

"No. Mr. Ikes is all of seventy years of age."

"Oh! Does he do a dry goods biz, too?"

"No."

"Didn't I see a delivery wagon here, a day or two ago?"

"Do you know about that?" demanded the office boy, quickly.

"What do you know?"

"Why, it was funny. Mr. Ikes advertised for a clerk here, and then he started to go out of town. He had just gone when the clerk sent me on an errand. When I come back the clerk had skipped and he hasn't been seen since. It is dreadful queer, for nothing was taken from the office—no robbery attempted."

Jingo Jim thought he could understand that much. Stanford had wanted a good place into which to lure Aldrick Lee, so he had posed as a clerk briefly until it was done.

"I telegraphed for Mr. Ikes," added the speaker, "and he is back, but the clerk is still missing."

"How do you account fer et?"

"Then about the delivery wagon," added the office boy, with animation. "Some of the neighbors do say there was a man kidnapped and taken away in that wagon while the clerk had charge here."

"Any more?"

"Nothing, except that we have learned that the wagon once belonged to a big dry goods firm, and was sold to a man down near the river, but that man can't be found now."

"The man lived near the river, eh? Where?"

"I don't know, but it was down that way."

"Not very definite," thought Jingo Jim, "but ef all signs point toward the river I guess I may as well point that way myself."

Speaking aloud he carried on the conversation with the other boy for some time, but did not reveal anything of importance. Finding that nothing was to be gained by the conversation, he walked off and moved toward the river, taking, as near as he could judge, the direction pursued by the wagon when it whirled himself and Aldrick Lee to captivity.

Several times he hesitated, impressed with the idea that the section was not one which so much of a sport as Ruthven Stanford would naturally frequent, but he was encouraged by the further thought that Ruthven might then be desirous of quiet, and that his real home was in a circle just as humble as the river district of Brooklyn.

Several blocks had been traversed when Jim almost ran over a man as each tried to turn the same corner in opposite directions. Jim was not aggressive, and he dodged out of the way, while the man kept on without hardly looking at him.

The young New Yorker, however, stopped short and looked hard.

"Say, by jingo!" he murmured, "ain't that Nat?"

Keeping his eyes fixed on the retreating man his suspicion received confirmation.

"Yes, sirree, that's one o' the skunks that Ruthven used ter trap Aldrick Lee! Crickey! but won't I foller? Wal, I should shout that I would!"

And he did. Falling in behind the supposed Nat, he moved quietly along and was thus led toward the river still further. Finally the stream came in sight, and, though the point was new, Jim was encouraged.

"It is Sporty Stanford's pal, sure, an' he has biz on hand. All right; so hev' I. I'm goin' ter see this game out!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIVER GANG.

The supposed Nat walked out by the river side. Jingo Jim paused in the shadow of a house and reconnoitered.

"He crosses over and goes close to the drink. Kinder seems that he is interested in the vessel that lays by the pier. Yes, that is his home-base, I guess. He speaks ter some o' the men who lounge on the pier. Wal, so fer that don't prove nothin'; anybody could do that. Do I see Sporty Stanford anywheres? Not ter my knowledge."

James shook his head. For a moment he was inclined to fear that he had followed a useless trail, and been drawn from all chance of seeing Ruthven, but this fear was forgotten the next instant.

"Hey! W'ot's that?" cried the spy.

One of the men on the pier had tossed some object into the air.

"Crickey!" exclaimed Jim, "that looked like a saddle! Will he do it again? Yes, up it goes! Say, it is a saddle!"

Forgetful of possible danger, the peddler

ran across the street, and gained a position much nearer the pier.

"There it is," he added, eagerly. "It is a saddle, an' no less, an' it looks jest like my piller. Can it be?"

The man had tired of his amusement, and the object thereof lay unnoticed by the men, but Jim was all nerved up.

"This ain't a stable," he pursued, "but a mighty queer place fer things that belong ter a hoss. I want ter see it closer."

If James had been prudent his curiosity would have been kept in within bounds, but he forgot Ruthven Stanford, Doctor Walker and all else in what he considered a personal matter.

"Ef that's my piller I am goin' ter have it!" was his decision.

Neither the street at this point nor the pier was an orderly place, and the various articles of little account—boxes and the like—furnished cover which he proceeded to utilize.

Stooping, he crept closer to the saddle, and each moment gave force to his belief that it was the same of which he had been robbed. When he could get his mind off of it a trifle he satisfied himself that the man he had followed was none other than Nat, and his face lighted up.

"I'm right inter et," he declared, "an' I shouldn't wonder ef I made it lively fer them. My raid grows big."

The men, all of whom bore the stamp of stevedores, or some other line of river workers, were three in number, and they seemed to be idling time away. Presently two of them walked to the limit of the pier, and Jim became more nerved up than ever.

"Why don't the other one go? I don't exactly like ter make a break while he is right there, fer he might get his claws onter me, but I must hev' that thing, come what may. It is mine, an'—"

The third man yawned, rose and walked to join his comrades.

"Crickey!"

Jingo Jim leaped out of cover and darted like a hawk toward the saddle. His nimble legs played their best, and he was not long in reaching the coveted article. He snatched it up, and turned with it clasped to his heart; he ran like a deer toward the street.

For once his legs played him false. He stumbled over a loose board, and both he and the board went flying with a tremendous clatter. Jim came down hard on the pier, but his wits were as active as ever. Even while he was falling it flashed upon him that all this noise was sure to be heard and that further running would be dangerous just then.

He had fallen close to a box which lay on its side, and, with a quick motion, he rolled over and hid himself behind it. More, he noticed that the box was uncovered and presented its open side invitingly. It was a good cover, and timely.

He crawled into the box.

He did not dare to look out, so he hugged the saddle and waited until the alarm, if such he had caused, should blow over. Lovingly he surveyed his trophy.

"This is it, sure pop—this is my own saddle. I would know it among a thousand. That ragged place, and that one, an' the one back there—why, I could swear to them rags. Hi, hi! but I guess I will have my piller back, after all!"

Footsteps sounded on the pier and Jim shrank further into his lair and waited. Voices came to his hearing.

"I'm sure it was on this pier, Nat," declared an unseen man.

"It did sound close."

"But who could have done it?"

"I don't see nobody."

"Sounds travel a long ways sometimes."

"That sound didn't."

"I agree that it was near by."

"Then what was it?"

There was no reply, but the men moved about somewhat, as if trying to solve the question.

"By gum! They will look inter this box, sure as guns," muttered Jim. "Wal, ef they come, I won't surrender. I'll fight them an' then run, that's w'ot I'll do!" And he hugged the saddle all the closer.

Presently the men gathered again near his hiding-place. Perhaps they believed they had solved the mysterious noise; it was not mentioned further.

"I wish Stanford would hurry up," remarked Nat.

"So do I. I feel nervous, an' the sooner we get away the better it will suit me."

"When it is over I shall serve him no more. I had rather be an honest boatman. Here Al Lee is in the same callin' as we be, yet we do him dirt jest because Stanford pays us for it."

"Cheese it, old man. Never kick on a bargain you make."

"Right, Nat," assented the third man.

"Well, I don't want ter land in Sing Sing," persisted the kicker. "There lays our vessel, an' in her cabin is Al Lee an' the girl Kate. Suppose the police descend on us an' rescue them?"

"Bah! Pat, you lack nerve!"

"That's a lie, Nat Jones, an' you know it; but Pat Flynn never showed up as a villain before, an' I don't like it."

"Do you mean ter play Stanford false?"

"No. I am in fer this cruise ter Staten Island, an' I'll stick to it; but one o' the prisoners in that vessel is a feller boatman of ours, an' it sort o' hurts me ter use him so mean. I wouldn't care much ef he escaped from the vessel before we get away fer Staten Island."

"Now, see here, Pat; this won't do!" declared Nat. "Kick on Stanford all you see fit, but when you talk that way it looks as ef you was liable ter do us all dirt. You can't go back on Stanford without goin' back on us, too. Would you betray us?"

Nat's manner had grown belligerent, and Pat hastened to reply:

"Not a bit of it. Even ef it wasn't fer you I shouldn't back out; I am in fer this thing, an' I'm goin' through with it. Don't be afraid o' my backin' out."

Peace was restored between the boatmen, but they had put Jingo Jim into a state of mind.

"Say," he muttered, "but they hev' got Al Lee shut up in that measly old boat, an' they're goin' ter take him off. Great guns! but ain't that bad!"

It was bad, and it worried the peddler greatly. He had his beloved saddle, but this did not make him wholly happy. He was loyal to his friends, and did not think of deserting Lee, now the latter was in trouble.

"Ef they let me leave this box I'll make a try ter look inter the vessel an' see ef Al is ter be found—if I can hide this saddle anywheres."

He looked lovingly at his trophy, and began to turn it over and scan its various parts.

"Hey!" he suddenly added, "this has been monkeyed with. Been cut open in places, sure as you live. Jest malicious mutilation, that's w'ot it is. Hold on, James! Doc Walker thought there was valuables inside of it. The gang has ripped her open an' took out the boodle, sure as guns!"

This was an unpleasant discovery, but he did not let his mind dwell upon it. Nat and his fellows moved back a little, and the spy became alive to the fact that the time had come for him to get out of his place of practical captivity. He thrust his head out and looked.

"I kin make it."

With this terse decision he gathered up the saddle and flashed out of the box. A headlong dive for a few yards took him to another and larger box, near the extremity of the pier, and there he was safe.

He proceeded to do some quick thinking, and the result was that he concealed the saddle and moved again. He was resolved to make prompt effort to see Aldrick Lee, and as he could see no way of reaching the vessel by the pier, he was going to try the only other way open to him.

He cast off his coat and shoes, and then quietly lowered himself into the water.

Silent as a fish he swam toward the craft, but the members of the gang were so close to the edge of the pier that he had to move slowly. Finally he touched the hull, grasped a dangling chain and began to raise himself.

He rose successfully, and, at last, was near the rail. He had for the time being lost sight of Nat and the rest, so he raised his head to take a survey of the scene as it was then. The result was startling.

He found himself almost face to face with Ruthven Stanford!

CHAPTER XV.

THE NIGHT TRAGEDY.

Jingo Jim dodged down behind the rail with celerity.

"Crickety! who would hev' thought of seein' him!" was his muttered comment.

Certainly the spy had not expected to see Stanford. True, he had lost sight of pier and deck for a while, but no sounds had told that the sport had arrived on the field of action. He was there, however, as Jim learned to his alarm, and, as the spy had risen within twenty feet of Stanford, it was only the fact that the latter was looking the other way that saved him from discovery.

James clung to the chains and became very still.

"Sporty Stanford has beat me out," he thought. "He has got a lap ahead o' me, an' now how be I goin' ter ketch up? I can't go through the side o' this blamed old schooner, an' Sporty will get his peepers onder me ef I try ter cross the deck."

It was an annoying situation, but James was a good deal of a philosopher, and, when the first flush of his disappointment had passed, he brightened up perceptibly.

Anxious to see all that was transpiring, his head was again raised above the rail.

"Stanford consults with Nat. The sport seems a bit worried. Now what has gone wrong with the dear boy?"

Several minutes passed before he found out, but Ruthven suddenly took a quick turn across the deck and came closer to the spy. The sport looked toward the street.

"No sign of them yet," he grumbled.

"They may be along any minute," replied Nat.

"But they are half an hour late already, and my orders were that they should not fail to be prompt."

"I guess they will come."

"But, man, we can't wait. I confess I am nervous over this matter, and I dare not delay here. I fear our extra men have succumbed to love of whisky and filled up on that stuff, so they are out of the hunt. Nat, can we sail her alone?"

"Bless me, no."

"We are four."

"But only two practical seamen."

"True."

"It never would do. The harbor we make at Staten Island is a tough one to pull into, and two men never could make it."

"All depends on our aids. However, I don't think they are coming, and, if they don't show up soon I shall change the programme."

"In what way?"

"Get out the wagon again, and take our prisoners off to another prison that I might use."

"I would not risk taking them into the streets—"

"We must get them away from here," declared the sport.

The speaker was nervous, and he began to walk the deck with quick steps, both he and Nat in the meanwhile watching the shore closely.

Jingo Jim hung to his place and watched them, hoping for some turn in his favor.

Minutes passed, and then there was an excited conversation at the further side of the deck. It was followed by the hasty departure of Pat, and Jim knew something had been decided upon. What it was he saw when the old familiar ex-delivery wagon came rolling down on the pier.

"Go below and bring them up," ordered Stanford.

Jingo Jim chuckled.

"Going ter try the street game again, be they?" he murmured. "Ef they succeed jest let ye'r uncle know. Ef they drive off of this pier I will leg it after them an' hail the first cop I see. Oh! won't I do them up the worst way! Ha, ha, ha!"

He was very merry over the situation, but he forgot it all when there was a stir by the companionway and a group emerged from that vicinity. The spy quickly discovered that the prisoners had been brought up—he could see a man and a girl, and it needed little survey to tell that they were Aldrick Lee and Kate Floyd.

The sport confronted them, and seemed to gloat over their misfortunes, whereupon Aldrick broke forth explosively

"Well, knave, what new scheme have you afoot?"

"You will learn later," responded Stanford.

"There is no limit to your villainy, I am aware, but one thing I ask of you if you have a grain of manhood left. This girl—I know not how she has incurred your hatred, but she is a mere child. Set her free, and then I will fight it out with you."

"Fight it out?"

"If you prefer the term, I will accept what fate has in store for me."

"I rather think you will accept it; I don't see how you are to help yourself."

"Let us not argue that. I know your hatred of me. I ask you to free the girl."

"I will not!"

"What harm has she done to you?"

"That is my business."

"She is young—"

"What sharp eyes you have! Young! I suppose you judge by her size, face, teeth and temper. Wonderful perceptions you have. You know a good deal!"

"You don't talk like a man of sense," retorted Lee. "You are turning from villainy to folly. Still, I ask no favors of you. Will you favor another person—an innocent person—this young girl?"

"No!"

"Then, by Jupiter! I will use the little power that is left in me!"

The boatman spoke with sudden vehemence, and, as he did so, he threw off Nat's grasp and leaped upon Stanford. It was an impetuous attack, and the sport reeled back from it, crying out for help. His followers rushed to his aid, while Jingo Jim hastily scrambled up to the deck.

"By gum! I want a hand in this muss!" exclaimed the young peddler.

Just as his feet touched the deck he saw that he was too late. Aldrick had forced Stanford back close to the rail, and all the other members of the gang had piled upon the single man so that it was hard for Jim to detect the exact situation, but one thing soon came in a decisive manner.

Bang!

It was the report of a revolver, and the flash showed that the weapon had been held by Ruthven. Just how the rest of it happened Jim could not tell, but, in a moment more, the members of the gang were alone, and a splash followed in the dock.

"Great guns! Al Lee is overboard!" gasped the boy.

Stanford and his men stood motionless for a brief space of time, and then Nat broke forth explosively.

"We have lost him!"

"No, we haven't," declared the sport. "He has lost himself. He had me by the throat and was choking the life out of me, and I gave him his deserts. Lost him? Not much! I fired with the revolver touching his side, and you can rest assured he won't make more trouble."

Stanford leaned over the side of the vessel, but his men seemed to be frightened. They did not join him, but began to look around apprehensively, and Jingo Jim saw what prudence demanded of him. He took shelter behind an obstruction to their vision.

Jim was a good deal excited. It had not needed Stanford's argument to tell him that Lee's chances were small, and now he felt overwhelmed by the turn of affairs.

"Al is a goner," he thought, mournfully.

"Is there any sign of the fellow?" asked Nat, presently.

"No," replied the sport.

"Isn't he swimming away?"

"Swimming?" cried Stanford. "I tell you he is a dead man. I shot to kill. He's gone, and I'll serve all my enemies the same way!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MISSING MAN.

Jingo Jim shrank further back and shook his head. The sport's threat had been a sanguinary one, and his manner had been equal to his words.

"Ef they ketch me," thought the boy, "they will make me a defunct kid instantaner."

There was no chance for him to leave the deck then, so he kept quiet and waited. There was still a small chance that he would escape discovery, but he was directly in among the enemy, and discovery appeared almost certain.

Nat and the minor members of the party were thoroughly alarmed, and Pat expressed the general opinion when he exclaimed:

"I can't answer fer nobody else, but I am goin' to get out of here on the run."

"Me, too," added the third man.

"Will you turn cowards?" demanded Stanford.

"It's just like this, boss. Ef you hustle and get away from here at once we will stick by you, but that revolver shot may bring policemen down here who will find the dead man in the dock. I ain't going to wait for no such thing as that. If we can all skip together we can keep together, but I skip now, in company with you or alone. Which is it to be?"

"Your way is best," admitted the sport. "Get the girl to the wagon and all go together. Hustle!"

There was a flurry on deck, and, in a brief space of time, all the party were on the pier and getting into the wagon.

Jingo Jim was divided between two opinions, but his loyalty to Aldrick Lee finally led to his decision. He wanted to see that the wagon was stopped by the nearest policeman, but Lee might be drowning in the dock.

Agilely the spy mounted to the rail and then dropped down into the water. He

looked all around, but was just as unsuccessful as Stanford had been. He saw nothing of Lee. This did not lead him to despair. His theory that the boatman might be clinging to one of the supports kept his zeal up.

He looked long and carefully, but found nothing.

"That settles it!" he finally muttered. "Al Lee is a dead man—murdered by the red-faced thug. By gum! he shall swing fer that—he just shall! Poor Al! He was a right nice chap, an' I'm mighty sorry fer him. Say, but won't I get a move on now? I'll go ter the police, an' they may be able ter corral the gang this very night. I'll try it."

He climbed to the pier. Stanford and his aids had gone from view, and the whole place was still and deserted by all but himself.

He did not know where to find a police station, but he was not long in locating one. He was about to rush into the building, when he remembered that, in all probability, he would be held as a witness and deprived of his liberty for some weeks to come, so he resorted to another method. He wrote a note and sent it to the station house instead.

"Dun'no' as they will take any notice of it," he confessed, gloomily, "but I can't afford ter lose my liberty now. It never would do. Well, I've wound up here, so now I'll skip back ter New York."

He went, and, feeling the need of comfort from some one, sought Doctor Walker's hotel at once. The man from Partridge Plains had just come in, looking serious and tired.

"What luck?" asked James.

"I haven't seen any of the gang," admitted the doctor. "In fact, I took a notion to go and see if I could meet this friend of yours, Aldrick Lee. I went to his boarding house, but didn't find him there."

"I was afraid not."

"Boy, I want to explain to you what all this is about; I don't see any reason for secrecy."

"Nor me."

"First, about that saddle—"

Jingo Jim gave a start. For once he had forgotten his own interests in his zeal to help bring justice to Lee's foes, and the saddle had been accidentally left at the pier in Brooklyn.

"I will now state," added Walker, "just why I want it. I have reason to believe it contains a will."

"A will?"

"Yes. A testamentary document, you know, disposing of property."

"Oh!"

"Yes. I have told you about the doctor whom I succeeded at Partridge Plains. He lived to be ninety-six years old, and only died a few months ago. He was a very eccentric man, and his mind weakened as he reached such extreme age. After his demise we thought for a while he had made no will, but it was afterward learned that he had done so and that, with mistaken cunning, he had concealed it in that old saddle, fancying it was safer thus than any other way."

"Well, he was a queer blade," admitted Jim. "His trolley must hev' been twisted."

"You will now see why I came down here, post haste, when we suspected that the long-haired man—your sport—had stolen the spangled horse and the saddle. We learned by mere chance that the horse was in New York, so down I came, hoping to find the will still safe in the saddle."

"But why should Ruthven Stanford go all the way up there ter Partridge Plains to steal it?" inquired Jim.

"If there was no will he was, in one sense, heir to the old doctor."

"Oho! I see!"

"Now you have it all."

"No, I ain't. Who was the will s'posed ter favor?"

"Aldrick Lee."

"The dickens it was!"

"Yes. Stanford's real name, as you have learned, is Timothy Alberts. Perhaps I should not say he was heir to the old doctor, though it amounted to that, as you will see. Alberts married the woman who was the true heiress. She has been a cat's-paw in Alberts' hands ever since, partly because she holds him in fear, and partly because she is not so strong-minded as she might be. She is a mere cipher in life. Few people know that Stanford—or Alberts, as he really is—ever has been married, but such is the case. He has his wife, calls on her when he sees fit, uses her decently well, gives her plenty of money, and all that satisfies her. Yes, she is a mere cipher, and it is the sport who will handle the cash if it ever goes to the woman. See?"

"Sure! Where does Al Lee come in?"

"Not an heir with her, but he would be heir to all if she was dead. However, that does not count, for it is known that the old doctor made a will which gave Lee everything. Find that will and the woman is out of it, and Lee will be moderately rich."

"If he is alive."

"Why, you don't think anything has happened to him, do you?"

"I do that same!" declared Jim.

"I hope not."

"I know there has."

"What?"

"He's dead."

"What?" cried the doctor, springing up.

"Fact, by gum! Al has got done up an' he's shot an' drowned."

"You frighten me. Why do you think it? Speak out!—tell all!"

James was not reluctant, and the story of the adventures of the night in the Twin City were soon told. Doctor Walker listened with eager attention, and the end left him excited and dismayed.

"This is horrible, horrible!" he asserted. "I wish I had gone to young Lee as soon as I came to New York, but I feared he would blame us for losing the saddle, and I thought I would try to recover it before seeing him. Dead? Boy, we must go to the police of Brooklyn at once."

The speaker caught up his hat and was ready to go, but Jim was not so anxious. He well knew that if he appeared on the scene he was likely to be sent to the House of Detention as a witness, and he had a strong desire to keep his liberty. He resorted to strategy.

"Tell ye what, doc, you go ter Brooklyn an' see ter this, an' I will cruise around here in New York. It is pretty near certain that Sporty Stanford has crossed over here by now, an' I may be able ter drop right onto him."

"Well planned. Let it be so; we will work separately. Let us begin at once. Come!"

James was not reluctant, and they left the house together. Walker hastened off to the Twin City, and Jim pursued his way alone.

"Well, I've got rid of the doc, but w'ot be I ter do? My bluff fooled him an' he didn't insist on me goin' with him, but I have called my own bluff now. I don't know of nothin' to do."

He paused on a corner.

"No use o' goin' up ter Mother Mag's old home; they hev' flown that coop for good. Then where shall I strike out?"

The peddler indulged in a period of meditation, and then brightened up.

"Sure enough—why not call around near where Jugs Brown lives? Jugs wasn't over in Brooklyn with his dear friend Sporty Stanford, so he must hev' been in New York. I'll canter around there an' see w'ot I kin git my lamps onter."

Acting on this plan he set off briskly, and in due time he reached the block where he knew Jugs made his home. The hunt began.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESULTS OF THE RAID.

Jugs Brown was not visible when Jim sighted his house, but he stood and watched it sharply. It was a tenement house of some pretensions to outward decency, but Jim knew the police had made many a haul from there that had reinforced the ranks of Sing Sing convicts.

While he was considering how to act he was called by name.

"Hullo, Jingo Jim, how's the jumpin' kangaroos?"

James turned quickly and saw a boy of about his own years.

"Hey, that you, Skipsey?" he cried. "You live near here?"

"Right in there."

"You don't mean et! Say, do you know Jugs Brown?"

"Sure! Live right next ter him."

"Who does he herd with?"

"Has two rooms all by his lonesome, an' takes his appetite out with him when he feeds."

"Boss! Skipsey, I want ter visit you."

"Who invited you?"

"I did. Will you accept fer me?"

"Sure! Come along. Want ter pipe Jugs?"

Jim was not disposed to tell all he knew and kept his motives back, but had to confess that he wanted to get a view of Jugs Brown's room, and Skipsey declared he could arrange it easily, as there was a connecting door and he had a key, though nobody but himself knew of the last fact.

Arrangements were soon made and they entered the building.

Skipsey led the way to his parents' rooms, and, as they were out to the theater, the boys had nobody to molest them, or curtail their movements. Skipsey produced his key and boldly, yet carefully, unlocked Jugs Brown's door. The place was perfectly dark, however, and they drew back.

"He's probably abed," suggested Jim.

"Jugs ain't that sort. Ef he turns in before two o'clock it must be he's mighty sick. Ef you want ter see him you just wait a bit—"

Click!

"Say!" cried Skipsey, "that was a key in the hall-door to his room. Keep this one jest a bit open an' watch."

They looked and saw a man enter. It was not Jugs, but to James the appearance meant far more. The new comer was Ruthven Stanford.

The sport had undergone a change in his personal appearance. His elaborate clothes had disappeared, and in their place was a rough suit, a flannel shirt and a slouched hat. Jim quickly caught on to the fact that the plotter was in disguise, and he hardly heard Skipsey as the latter whispered:

"I've seen that feller before. He's a friend of Jugs, but he always has been dressed smart before."

Ruthven now took up all attention. Plainly, he was excited and nervous. He began to move about with quick, restless steps, and looked into both of Brown's rooms.

"Not here!" the sport remarked, aloud. "Confound it! Why should he be out when I need him so much? Perhaps he will soon come. I will wait; in fact, I can't do anything else, for there is not a safe place in either of the two cities for me now. The blood of Aldrick Lee is on my hands, and I doubt not that the police will soon be on my track. And I owe all this to that meddlesome boy, who has upset my plans right along."

Jim closed the connecting door wholly and whispered softly to his companion.

"Say, Skipsey, kin you go an' bring in a policeman?"

"There is a detective—Mr. Spear—lives right on this block, an' I know him. He would believe me quicker than a stranger."

"Skipsey, you swing yer legs lively an' get that same detective. Tell him there is a murderer here. See?"

"I'm off!"

The second boy slipped quietly away; then James opened the door a bit again. Ruthven was still there and on his feet, but was occupied in a different way now. He had a sheet of paper in his hands and was reading busily.

"Last will and testament of Phineas Rogers, physician, of Partridge Plains, New York," he read, sneeringly. "He gives and bequeathes all to his 'honest' grand-nephew, Aldrick Lee. Bah! Lee never will get it, for he is food for the fishes."

"More's the pity!" murmured Jim.

"A pretty chase I've had for this paper," proceeded the sport. "I went to Partridge Plains to find the will, but found nothing; stole a horse out of spite; came to New York City; tossed away the old saddle that had served my purpose for a few days, sold the horse and thought I was out of the hunt—and then learned by accident from a friend I had made in Partridge Plains that the will was in the saddle. Hunted for the saddle and found a boy using it as a pillow; stole it from him, carried the saddle off to Brooklyn and got the will out of it. Yes, I have the precious paper, and I defy all the world to get it now."

The chandelier over the sport's head was equipped with several burners. He had lighted all, and now he went closer to them and held the will near the light.

"Vanish!" he added, with savage jubilation. "Go back to ashes!"

He held the paper closer and was about to ignite it when suddenly an arm was wound around his neck and the paper was snatched from his grasp.

"Not yet, old man!" cried a small, keen voice.

Stanford wheeled. He was just in time to see a boy fleeing toward the door, and recognition came swiftly.

"The same kid!" he almost shouted.

His face grew red with rage and he rushed to seize plucky Jim, but, as the latter tore the door open which led to the hall, he ran fully into the arms of another person. Three strong men crowded into the room and Skipsey stood close behind.

"There he is!" shouted Skipsey.

Ruthven Stanford was not slow of wits, and he saw that he was cornered. Mad with rage, he drew a revolver, but before he could use it the three men pounced upon him.

"That is Detective Spear and two of his friends," announced Skipsey.

Ruthven was not giving up tamely. On the contrary, he made a desperate resistance, but all in vain, and he was finally wholly subdued. Held in the grasp of the detective's aids he scowled upon all there.

"Now," spoke Spear, "let me know what this is all about."

The story was told with brevity and elo-

quence, and the detective was fully impressed.

"A dark deed, truly," he admitted. "But is this really the murderer?"

"Yes, sure," replied the young peddler.

"There can be no mistake?"

"It's Sporty Stanford," declared Jingo Jim. "Yes, that is the man who killed the boatman!"

The prisoner began a vehement denial, but was soon cut short. His captors took him out of the house, but they had no sooner reached the sidewalk than they met several men face to face.

"Crickey!" gasped Jim. "It is Al Lee, alive! Hooray!"

"Yes, it is Al Lee," cried the boatman, "but I charge Ruthven Stanford with seeking to murder me. He nearly did it, too, though his revolver shot went wild at the pier. I was carried away by the water and finally landed well below. We have rescued the girl, Kate Floyd, from the power of this knave, and have been pursuing him. This gentleman with me is Doctor Walker, whom I lately met by chance, and the rest of the party are detectives."

"Then there is no murder," remarked Spear.

"There is plenty of villainy for which Stanford must answer, and he is under arrest."

"I surely don't object, for this boy has told me too much for me to advise clemency."

Aldrick turned and seized Jim's hand.

"My lad!" he exclaimed; "you are a trump card."

Doctor Walker pressed forward and took the other hand.

"He beats all the pills and powders I ever turned out of my shop!" asserted the doctor.

"Say, give my wings a rest!" requested James, grinning with delight.

"Everything is owed to him," added Aldrick. "I will not forget him, either."

"All right, nibsey!" coolly replied James. "I don't guess Sporty Stanford will, either. By the way, Al, here is the will of old Doctor Rogers. Accept it with my blessin'; an' now, let us all adjourn an' take a snooze in our proper places. Sporty Sanford, your proper place is the Tombs. See how you like that hotel. This winds you up, I guess."

It did wind the sport up, for, as the final result of Jim's long and dangerous raid on him and his plans, he was tried, convicted and sent to Sing Sing. He went with Jugs Brown, Mother Mag and others of the gang as his companions in prison life.

Doctor Walker returned to his home triumphant.

Aldrick Lee inherited the money at stake, and did not forget Jingo Jim and his jamboree. He has sent the street patrol to school, and the boy's prospects for the future are of the best. His jamboree bids fair to be the making of him.

THE END.

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